

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
Office of University Relations

University Relations' goal is to build upon previous successes as well as create new initiatives to better communicate the message of diversity within the unit and across the University. While those efforts are encouraged, there seem to be few specific action items that detail how these goals will be met. A more detailed strategic plan for addressing the Challenges of the *Framework* both within the unit and in the unit's University-wide responsibilities would provide a context through which the unit's function within the University would be strengthened. More details on implementation strategies, responsible parties, timeframes, assessment measures, and accountability are necessary.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ Holding meetings with University Relations staff members to ensure all unit members understand the role diversity plays at Penn State is positive. A specific definition of diversity and more information on implementation and content would be helpful.
Response: In addition to defining diversity as an awareness of and appreciation for different cultures, ethnicities, sexual preferences and perspectives, University Relations also includes disabilities, adult learners and LBGT.
- ❖ Expansion of the role of the diversity committee is positive. More information on the anticipated representation, charge, and function, of the committee would be helpful, as well as articulation of the relationship of the diversity committee and unit administration and their roles in diversity planning for the unit.
Response: Representation on the committee will come from all areas of the unit and will examine all diversity issues within the unit. It will also play a central role in the preparation of future diversity plans.
- ❖ In portraying the “diverse and vibrant student body” (as well as faculty, staff, and administration), emphasis on images of racial/ethnic and gender diversity should be complemented with images that represent a broader scope of diversity including disabilities, LGBT, adult learners, etc.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Planned actions in support of this Challenge are positive. Differentiation of internal and University-level actions would be helpful. More detail about implementation and assessment measures should be included.
Response: We will continue to promote the Diversity Newswire and will measure the number of subscribers year-to-year to determine effectiveness in reaching new audiences with diversity messages.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Emphasis on portraying diversity in all University publications, advertisements, and other recruitment vehicles is positive. The unit is encouraged to extend this emphasis beyond recruitment vehicles and to strive to portray a broad range of diversity as reflective of the University's focus in all University publications, advertisements and other vehicles.
- ❖ Developing greater linkages with the African American community and working with focus groups of minority students to develop communications strategies are positive. The unit is encouraged to expand the planned initiatives under this Challenge to be more inclusive of the range of diverse populations served by Penn State, including race/ethnic populations beyond African-American; the LGBT community, adult learners, persons with disabilities, first-generation students, etc.
- ❖ The unit is encouraged to complement its recruiting efforts by exploring opportunities to support and showcase the University's retention efforts.
Response: We will look for more opportunities to focus on retention.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Working with the Office of Human Resources to seek diverse candidates for job openings is a positive strategy. The unit is encouraged to approach demographics not as a barrier to recruiting and retention but an opportunity for creatively addressing the challenge.
- ❖ Efforts to continue internships, wage positions and staff development programs to provide experience for underrepresented students while also exposing staff to more diverse perspectives are positive.
- ❖ Establishing the expectation that directors and managers will encourage awareness of diversity within their units and value diversity-related activity in the SRDP is positive. More information on efforts to inform directors and managers of diversity-related professional development opportunities would be helpful.
- ❖ The unit is encouraged to plan initiatives to support and showcase the University's efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

Education and Scholarship

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies

- ❖ While the unit does not have a direct involvement with curriculum development, given the unit's "critical and central role in communicating the University's commitment to diversity," the unit is encouraged to explore the opportunity to support the University's curriculum integration efforts. Possibilities include highlighting aspects such as the international/intercultural curriculum focus, exemplary diversity related courses, diversity-related scholarship, community service and teaching innovations, and scholars from underrepresented groups in the broad range of the unit's public relations.

Response: Doing more to publicize diversity related courses and international/intercultural curriculum will be a focus during the coming year.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Including diverse representation on all internal committees is positive.
- ❖ More specific actions regarding support for the professional development of all employees, including members of underrepresented groups, would be helpful.
- ❖ It should be noted that the focus on "underrepresented groups" within this Challenge represents a positive and inclusive approach and could be applied throughout the Challenges.
- ❖ The unit is encouraged to plan actions to support and showcase the University's efforts to diversify University leadership and management.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Continuation of advertising and marketing efforts; public statements supporting inclusiveness; job development; and making the pool of job candidates more diverse are positive strategies.