

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Update
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
Intercollegiate Athletics
Spring 2010

Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA) has clearly made significant progress in addressing the Challenges. In particular, efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate student-athletes from diverse backgrounds have been quite successful and the department appears to have made this a priority, particularly for African-Americans. Some variability in representation of other minority groups is noted, and demographic information indicates less progress has been made among employees in the department. Other positive steps include the development of the Athletics Council for Diversity and Inclusion (ACDI) and expansion of Ability Athletics programming.

One noted omission is an update on the four actions mandated in 2007 by President Spanier in light of the findings of the Affirmative Action Office about the climate in the Women's Basketball Team. These included conducting exit interviews of Lady Lion basketball players; revising the protocol for exit interviews for all student athletes; insuring that all incoming student athletes attend an informational training session conducted by the Office of Affirmative Action; and reviewing, at the annual fall meeting of all staff, the University policies related to non-discrimination. The review team considers the lack of this information to be a serious omission and asks that the relevant information about these activities be forthcoming.

The team also notes that the term "first year student" is preferred to "freshman."

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ Listserv communications and an updated Web site are the primary mechanisms for communicating with student-athletes, staff, and faculty about diversity issues. While this may be effective internally, the Web site is difficult to navigate for those not familiar with the Unit and does not reflect the good work the ACDI is doing. Efforts to make the site more user-friendly are strongly recommended.
- ❖ The update includes a clear definition, mission, and goals related to diversity and inclusion.
- ❖ It is noted that ICA does not have a multicultural coordinator, unlike many other units its size. However, the reconfiguration of the ACDI and its committees appears to be an appropriate avenue for fostering diversity and may enable the message to reach a wider audience.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Data are presented that show results of staff and student-athlete surveys. Data indicate areas that can be targeted for improvement (e.g., 15% of staff disagree that there is a healthy and positive diversity climate at Penn State). These are all positive developments. If the survey is to be conducted regularly, ICA is encouraged to have it updated to gain insights into the perspectives of other specific underrepresented groups. As currently implemented, the survey inquires about diversity in general, certainly a useful question, but this leaves the climate for specific groups unexamined.
- ❖ Two Sexual Harassment & Discrimination Resource Representatives have been appointed. More information about the training they receive and the extent to which staff and students within ICA utilize them would be useful.
- ❖ Multicultural Fly Fishing is noted as a unique program. More information about the numbers of participants and any measures of effectiveness would be welcome.
- ❖ The substantial investment in community involvement by student-athletes is applauded.
- ❖ ICA is commended for its partnership with the LGBTQA Student Resource Center, which may be a best practice. The number of liaisons is notable. It would be helpful to know more about the sport-specific training they receive. It is also unclear what the functions are of the liaisons and the degree to which others in the Unit understand their functions.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ There do not appear to be any recruitment and/or retention plans in place for international student athletes.
- ❖ Recruiting African American student athletes is an area of strength for ICA, as are graduation rates of student-athletes. Comparable efforts to recruit other underrepresented populations are warranted as well.
- ❖ Ability Athletics is an innovative program and constitutes a best practice.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Current staffing as presented in Appendix A-14 appears to show that representation of females and minorities are below University averages, and efforts to improve these disparities appear merited, particularly in leadership and head coaching positions.
- ❖ The Diversity Resources Brochure being considered by ICA may prove to be a helpful tool for recruitment. Similarly, the prospect of a staff mentoring program sounds promising.
- ❖ The efforts of the recruitment and retention subcommittee of ACIDI to strategize with NCAA representatives for ways to increase the diversity of applicant pools are laudable.

Education and Scholarship

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters U.S. and International Cultural Competencies

- ❖ Excellent data are presented for staff and student-athlete attendance at diversity related programming.
- ❖ Having two courses that include sessions on diversity issues is notable.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The involvement of an Assistant Athletic Director with the NCAA-sponsored national student-athlete climate survey is an important example of the Unit's visible commitment to diversity.
- ❖ ICA is encouraged to take the lead in developing women for leadership positions. Evidence of success in encouraging diversification in leadership and management positions would be beneficial. For example, how many employees attend leadership conferences?

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The numbers add up to more than 100% in table A17, suggesting that some individuals are being counted twice.
- ❖ The inclusion of diversity related goals in Unit strategic planning is commendable.
- ❖ SRDP accountability incorporates diversity-related activities. Recognition and reward for diversity-related involvement and programming may be best practices, pending more details.