

**Feedback on Final Update on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
Finance and Business
Spring 2010**

The Finance and Business (F&B) update exhibits strong support for diversity at the organization's highest levels. Web sites and other documents provide information about diversity to F&B staff throughout the ranks. The review team suggests increased attention to religious diversity and verification that employees are making use of resources provided (such as the Web sites mentioned). Overall, the update is an impressive body of evidence regarding F&B's commitment to diversity work. ***RESPONSE: Plans are already underway to form a Focus Group on Religious Diversity within F&B. The Fostering Diversity Key Initiative (KI) Manager attended relevant sessions during the 2010 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in preparation for this new group.***

The update could be improved by paying closer attention to developing concrete performance indicators for the most strategic initiatives and then measuring outcomes against these indicators. For example, the review team identified some potential best practices in the update, such as diversity training for part-time students, but without data outcomes that indicate progress against established thresholds for success, it is impossible to know whether or not these endeavors achieved their intended results. Without these kinds of assessments in place, despite commendable actions, how can F&B really know it is meeting its goals? Also, it appears that the update does not attempt to systematically answer the *Framework* assessment questions but instead only addresses F&B's diversity strategic plan. It might have been useful to mention this point explicitly so that the review team would have understood the overall approach at the outset. Finally, better mechanisms should be identified to extend to other campuses some of the fine ideas and programs that F&B has developed. It is somewhat understandable that the bulk of the update focuses on University Park, but the team thought that F&B's experience with diversity could be very constructive for many other campuses. ***RESPONSE: There are 200 F&B employees at other campus locations that are under the administrative jurisdiction of the local Chancellor. Where possible, we have replicated our initiatives to those locations. For example, we have had Diversity Interns at PS Berks and PS Erie.***

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The update lays out an impressive array of communication strategies and feedback mechanisms to ensure that diversity is a priority that is reinforced from the top level down. However, how well is this information being deciphered and processed by employees, especially in terms of actions and Unit culture? A better grasp of these dynamics might assist F&B with its stated "backlash issues." The review team commends F&B for addressing this problem head on but suggests an external assessment to foster more forthright responses from staff. ***RESPONSE: F&B uses an external agency to conduct our Diversity Climate Surveys to ensure confidentiality with the responses. All survey results are disaggregated by work unit so that we can determine just how well the culture is being impacted by our diversity efforts.***
- ❖ Along these lines, F&B is proactive in its own internal evaluation of employee attitudes regarding its diversity endeavors and has adapted its strategies to respond to its findings and changing realities.
- ❖ It is noteworthy and commendable that according to the results of the 2008 Penn State Faculty/Staff Survey, F&B ranks more favorably than the rest of the University on several issues related to diversity.
- ❖ The robust informational networks and venues that promote diversity as a priority within F&B contain several potential best practices. However, without outcomes data that demonstrate a tangible impact on F&B's diversity goals, further judgment must be withheld.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The review team questions whether "increased infrastructure," OPP's statement and process for dealing with intolerance, or numerous Web sites on diversity are the most efficient ways of promoting a positive climate, especially without rigorous outcomes assessment. A data-informed summary, including

benchmarking against other similar units, on how many incidents were handled by the intolerance process and what types of outcomes were achieved would be revealing. The team suggests that F&B assess the impact of the new assistant to the senior vice president, especially how this position has increased trust.

- ❖ The reception for employees of color is quite positive, but the team cautions against strong generalization of attendees' views because a number of staff from this group did not attend, which could be due to mistrust issues. **RESPONSE: More than 75% (57 of 74) of the invitees attended this reception. This is an impressive majority and their input tended to be consistent.** Nevertheless, gathering input from those who attended is to be commended, and further systematic data gathering could solidify the assessment of climate for these employees.
- ❖ It is noteworthy that in response to survey responses, two new focus groups within F&B were formed since 2006: disabled employees and white males.
- ❖ Some F&B employees feel they are discriminated against because of religious belief; the review team suggests that more attention be given to how to address this problem.
- ❖ Overall, significant attention has been paid to this Challenge and some signs exist that it is paying off.
- ❖ The regular use of focus groups attended by top leaders is an impressive tactic for hearing out real issues. The focus group among those who expressed "backlash" against some of F&B's diversity endeavors is a potential best practice and appears to have helped temper attitudes. Without clearer outcomes assessment, including baseline data and movement against these baselines, this judgment is still somewhat tentative.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ This Challenge is difficult to assess given the lack of information about the composition of student part-time F&B employees. F&B's plans to collect these data should be a priority. **RESPONSE: Race/ethnicity data is optional on the payroll system's WAPP form that is used to enter all part-time employees into IBIS. Therefore there is incomplete data available in the warehouse and no readily available means to capture diverse student data. F&B will seek alternate measures to collect this data about their student employees.**
- ❖ The review team encourages a creative approach to this Challenge. Include student employees on committees and cultivate participation in FastStart among full-time staff. **RESPONSE: As reported in the 2010-15 Plan, 9 F&B employees have served as mentors in FastStart over the past 10 years; some for that entire time.** F&B might benefit students by making additional effort to ensure that job opportunities are posted in arenas commonly frequented by diverse groups, such as in the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, international houses, LGBT publications, etc. These initiatives could help create a broader pool of applicants from targeted groups for F&B.
- ❖ F&B should not underestimate how important full-time F&B staff can be to student retention. A friendly face and simple kindness among, for example, Housing and Food Services staff, can be particularly meaningful for students from diverse groups, who may be particularly isolated.
- ❖ Diversity training for part-time student employees is an excellent practice; however, without outcomes metrics it cannot be deemed a formal best practice.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The update emphasizes mentoring, internships, and other programs designed to recruit employees. However, the review team suggests that some analysis of outcomes might help to determine where the greatest potential for success lies. Recruitment and retention dynamics might be quite different among diverse staff compared to mainstream employees, and understanding these dynamics could help F&B hone its efforts to optimize its chances for success. **RESPONSE: The Diversity Mentoring Program is specifically geared towards retention, not recruitment. The Diversity Focus Groups and the reception for employees of color are specific efforts to understand these very dynamics. Recruitment and retention are discussion items at these meetings.**

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ Not applicable.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Expanding opportunities for high-level committee service to individuals from diverse groups with leadership and management potential is commendable. However, F&B has not yet had success hiring staff from diverse racial/ethnic groups to assume top leadership positions. ***RESPONSE: There has been some past success in racial/ethnic diversity. From 1995 to 2000, Dr. Betty Roberts (an African American female) served as the Assistant VP for Business Services.*** While employing the services of a national search firm did not result in the intended outcome, perhaps this approach should be used in all future searches over a particular level. Would it be possible to resubmit the names of some diverse candidates from the short list for other leadership positions? ***RESPONSE: Such candidates have been considered for the applicant pool on subsequent position openings, where appropriate.***
- ❖ A more strategic use of the Leadership Centre County program might help identify some community assets needed to better attract diverse candidates. Perhaps a recruitment packet that highlights the diversity assets that already exist in the area would be useful. ***RESPONSE: The Community Diversity Group was formed by Leadership Centre County alumni and they provide such resource information to local businesses and the University. The F&B New Employee Orientation includes this resource in their presentation.***

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ F&B reports an impressive amount of work under this Challenge with accountability for results attached to it. Diversity appears to be highlighted in the appropriate documents, raised in the appropriate leadership meetings, and included as an area of accountability for managers and directors.
- ❖ The Community Diversity Group's efforts in the community, supported by F&B, are impressive.