

**Feedback on Final Update on Progress Implementing  
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09  
Division of Student Affairs  
Spring 2010**

The Division of Student Affairs (SA) demonstrates a commitment to diversity in all of its aspects. The breadth and depth of diversity initiatives, including highly visible and active advocacy centers, multiple teaching modules and education programs, and outreach to the community, are exemplary. The final update provides much useful information about strategic initiatives and efforts to further organizational transformation. It also responds to issues raised in the mid-term evaluation, and provides useful information in the appendices.

Two areas for improvement for future updates are suggested. First, it would be helpful to see more in terms of measurable outcomes. And second, greater attention could be devoted to diversity matters in staff recruitment and training.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

***Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity***

- ❖ SA's final update articulates an exemplary understanding of diversity that responds to the mid-point progress feedback. However, the final update provides very little in terms of initiatives targeting the groups included in the expanded understanding of diversity, particularly veterans and disabled students.
- ❖ The Unit's use of multiple platforms and emerging technologies to disseminate its understanding of diversity is commendable.
- ❖ SA actively pursues initiatives that put students in dialogue with staff and leadership regarding diversity issues. The Student Leaders Roundtable is a commendable example of this.

***Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate***

- ❖ Student Affairs' efforts to address this Challenge have the potential to benefit campuses and units across the University. Information about outreach efforts would be welcome, including: which programs have been exported to other campuses, what has been the level of participation, and what measures of outcomes are available.
- ❖ While the charge of the Unit is to serve the needs of students, it would be helpful to see mention of initiatives to improve the climate for SA staff.
- ❖ The update mentions that there are ongoing efforts to construct a complete picture of the experiences and needs of under-represented students, but no specific strategies are identified.
- ❖ CERA is commended for its contributions to creating a welcoming climate across the University.
- ❖ The inclusion of the Greek system in the diversity initiatives of the division is laudable. The LGBTA's involvement in outreach to fraternities may be a best practice, but data attesting to outcomes of the effort are needed.
- ❖ SA's ongoing efforts to solicit and respond to student feedback through surveys, town hall meetings, breakfast meetings with student leaders, etc., are best practices. Other best practices include: the support given to and the activity of the LGBTA Student Resource Center; service outreach programs offered through the Greek System and other organizations; and the collaboration of the CWS with local authorities and agencies to coordinate responses to domestic and sexual violence.

**Representation (Access and Success)**

***Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body***

- ❖ It was unclear what assessment is being conducted regarding the effectiveness of the diversity education provided to students and parents at FTCAP and whether there is a focused diversity component of FTCAP or FYE program offered to adult and veteran students.
- ❖ SA initiatives offer new students many opportunities to engage in multicultural learning beyond the classroom and to facilitate a successful transition to University life. That such efforts sometimes join students and faculty in common extracurricular goals is laudable. However, apart from partial tracking of

student volunteer hours, no specific data are offered to demonstrate the impact such initiatives have on retention.

- ❖ The Unit provides many programs targeting student recruitment and retention and has extended its efforts to communicate its understanding of diversity to new students through FTCAP and the FYE in response to midpoint evaluation feedback. Pulse Surveys are used to measure outcomes and modify programs. The use of random samples tailored to target specific information and incorporating links to Pulse results throughout the University system is a best practice.

#### ***Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce***

- ❖ Requiring diversity training for staff and administrators is laudable. The update describes incentives for attendance and mechanisms for reporting. Information about the specific kinds of training offered would also be useful.
- ❖ The Unit is commended for its efforts to generate diverse candidate pools; nonetheless, racial/ethnic and gender figures remained static between 2005 and 2008. The Unit is encouraged to develop additional strategies to increase success in hiring diverse staff.

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ SA's leadership on the Coordinating Committee on University Assessment and its efforts to focus that committee's attention on developing metrics to assess co-curricular programs and the multicultural certificate is commendable.
- ❖ The creation of learning modules aimed at improving the multicultural competency of first-year students is commendable. It would be worthwhile to develop mechanisms to deliver this content to students who did not encounter it in the context of the first-year seminar.
- ❖ SA may be a leader in sharing resources and collaborating across campus. Ongoing efforts to increase partnerships with departments and faculty hold great promise.

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

#### ***Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management***

- ❖ Student Affairs is commended for exploring innovative models of internal decision-making to include multiple perspectives and voices. After the upheaval of reorganizing is overcome, it is hoped that further measurement will show improvement in staff perceptions of shared decision-making.
- ❖ The cultivation of future leadership through the CSA program seems promising. Information about levels of student involvement in planning, executing, and participating in the 2006 CSA event would be useful, as would information about follow-up efforts to measure participants' reactions to and perceptions of the event, and whether any programs are planned for the future.
- ❖ SA is encouraged to continue to monitor the situation of women and underrepresented groups in leadership positions over the next planning cycle.

#### ***Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals***

- ❖ Aligning the three advocacy centers (CWS, LGBTA, and PRCC) to enhance their ability to work collaboratively has been an effective transformation of organizational structure in support of diversity goals.
- ❖ The goal of building collaborative relationships with faculty is laudable, and merits significant attention in the next plan. Partnerships uniting faculty and student groups in diversity-focused curricular and extra-curricular initiatives could be best practices with beneficial effects across the University.