Feedback on Final Update on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
University Libraries
Spring 2010

The University Libraries update is conscientious and complete. It details an inclusive definition of diversity and outlines a multi-faceted approach to disseminating that definition widely; it meditates honestly on the implications of its spring 2007 climate survey; it surveys the substantial offerings it has designed in order to appeal to a diverse student body; and it delineates the means by which it cooperates with faculty in the presentation of a curriculum that is diverse. Finally, the update speaks to the need to extend its successful enterprises throughout a complicated University system—one that includes many libraries at many different campuses.

The update also notes that the Libraries "has been less than successful in increasing the diversity of our workplace"; it maintains a University Park orientation that has the effect of discounting some of what is happening (or needs to be happening) in the Libraries system-wide; and it is not yet a model of how assessment can lead to rethinking of current practices and the extent to which its efforts are actually achieving goals. The update could be enhanced by a consistent use of performance indicators to assess its initiatives, such as benchmarking against peer institutions, establishing baselines against outcomes measures, projecting thresholds that define success for further accomplishment, and then measuring progress at appropriate intervals when programming interventions have had a chance to work. Also, the update does not appear to systematically address the Libraries diversity strategic plan. ***RESPONSE: The University Libraries established an "Assessment Council" in 2010 to coordinate all assessment and statistical activities of the University Libraries. The Diversity Committee will work with the Assessment Council on ways to improve use of assessment methodologies for the Diversity Plan.***

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations
Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
- ❖ The update articulates a strong definition of diversity and outlines a robust set of mechanisms for creating a shared understanding of that definition: the Web site, orientations, newsletter, and so on.
- ❖ The Diversity Committee is charged with helping to disseminate this shared understanding, but the specific activities of the committee are less clear. The review team notes the Libraries' strategy to forego a diversity coordinator in favor of holding various administrators accountable (especially given the intricacies of our multi-campus system), but is the committee powerful enough to drive action? ***RESPONSE: The Diversity Committee has a formal charge. In addition, it meets with the Dean each July to plan out specific priorities and activities for the coming year. The Diversity Committee also meets with the Dean and Associate and Assistant Deans periodically to review progress, draft reports, etc.***
- ❖ Activity at non-University Park campuses needs more detailed explanation.
- ❖ Potential best practices: the Diversity Forum; library exhibits prominently displayed; required orientation for new employees. Positive data outcomes could demonstrate these initiatives as actual best practices. ***RESPONSE: We agree that more systematic reporting from the campus libraries is desirable. The Diversity Committee will work through the Associate Dean and Department Head for the campus libraries to strengthen campus activities and reporting.***

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
- ❖ The spring 2007 climate survey evidences a healthy climate in the Libraries overall, but the civility issue is obviously an area of concern based on rank and status. The review team commends the Libraries for facing this issue squarely by developing its Civility Team, and our review team encourages strategic planning, with metrics and outcomes measures, to address the problem at all Libraries locations. The Civility Team might become a best practice if evidence can be marshaled to demonstrate successful outcomes. ***RESPONSE: The Diversity Committee and its Civility Team will work with the Assessment Council to examine possible methodologies for metrics and outcome measures.***

Representation (Access and Success)
Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body
- ❖ The Libraries' programs, space allocations, and holdings reflect an exemplary student-centered approach to diversity. However, have these innovations actually helped to optimize "information gathering" skills among diverse students? The Libraries should develop ideas that go beyond simply making resources available to understanding how these resources are being utilized and how actual usage impacts on student outcomes (perhaps via the Pulse surveys). As a first start, since the Libraries has an outstanding disabilities services unit, why not ask those with disabilities how the Libraries' technology enhancements improve their research experiences? ***RESPONSE: "The Library Services for People with Disabilities" unit is being moved to the first floor of Central Pattee Library and enhanced significantly during the next year. "Before" and "after" interviews will be conducted with users to assess the services. Our Library Learning Services unit will be asked to work with teaching faculty to explore student outcomes, as the teaching faculty are responsible for curriculum content.***
- ❖ The Libraries has used internships and assistantships opportunities productively among students from diverse racial/ethnic groups. Could the internship opportunities be multiplied still further, after the example of the Pennsylvania Center for the Book? ***RESPONSE: The number of internship and assistantship opportunities is determined by funding available. Additional internships and assistantships are among the goals of the Libraries' Capital Campaign.***
- ❖ Best practice: committed use of wage-payroll funding for students from diverse racial/ethnic groups.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce
- ❖ The statement, "we have not been successful in increasing the diversity of our workplace," is refreshingly candid, indicating substantial good intentions. Appendix I supports this admission, and the update notes the loss of seven women from diverse racial/ethnic groups in the past four years. However, the Libraries' plans for rectifying retention problems repeat the mechanisms tried in the past—e.g., networking and keeping job descriptions broad to permit a wide range of applicants. Is it time to go beyond the constraints, break new ground, and approach this Challenge more strategically—open-ended and ongoing opportunity hiring (as opposed to waiting until a new position appears), benchmarking processes of other universities that have had substantial success, creating post docs in cooperation with the Africana Research Center, "growing your own" by reaching out to promising interns and encouraging them to go to graduate school in library or information science—perhaps with financial support predicated on their willingness to return to Penn State (something along these lines is hinted at on page 17), or "travelling library scholars" that visit library graduate schools to reach out to diverse candidates? Workforce issues should be an imperative in future efforts. ***RESPONSE: The retention issue is not one easily fixed, as these people left for major promotions at other research libraries or followed spouses who made job changes. The suggestions above address recruitment rather than retention.***

  Regarding recruitment, we have been successful with opportunity hiring. We have looked at post-masters internships but are not convinced that they would draw candidates to State College, as most such successful programs are in urban settings; and the campus libraries are not large enough to easily accommodate such a program. Since we do not offer degree programs, post-docs are not appropriate for the Libraries. We do communicate regularly with accredited graduate programs in the region to recruit. The Diversity Committee will share the above observations with the new Dean of University Libraries and Scholarly Communications upon her arrival on August 1, 2010.
- ❖ Once hired, the Libraries appears to do a fine job of supporting staff from diverse racial/ethnic groups.
- ❖ Potential best practices: broad job descriptions, networking, and the various strategies for effective searches that are detailed in the update. These initiatives are fine as far as they go, but is the Libraries doing anything so innovative that other universities would imitate us?

<u>**Education and Scholarship**</u>
Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies
- ❖ It appears from the update's narrative and appendices that the Libraries is doing a tremendous amount to support faculty in offering a diverse curriculum. Instructional sessions, outreach programs, and so forth are frequent and varied. Have efforts been made to learn if faculty who teach diversity-related courses at all campuses would appreciate additional help that is specially geared to particular course offerings? ***RESPONSE: Diversity-related course instruction is offered to faculty by all campus libraries within the system.***
- ❖ The Libraries purchases substantial diversity-related materials and collections. Its diversity holdings are impressive and foster outstanding scholarship on diversity-related issues.

<u>**Institutional Viability and Vitality**</u>
Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management
- ❖ Given the profession's broader demography, it has been a challenge historically to diversify the Libraries' leadership in terms of race and ethnicity. A critical examination of the problem is called for along with a focus on making Penn State part of the solution, and the same kind of innovative approaches proffered by the review team for Challenge 4 apply here. Obviously, low numbers contribute to a retention problem. If the Libraries could achieve some kind of critical mass of racial/ethnic diversity in its leadership profile, retention might improve. Perhaps by leveraging Dean Eaton's national prominence progress could occur. ***RESPONSE: Dean Eaton will be retiring on July 31, 2010. This issue will be referred to the new dean upon her arrival August 1, 2010.***
- ❖ The Libraries has succeeded in attracting women for leadership positions. Is Penn State doing better than comparable universities, or is our leadership demographic characteristic of the profession at large?
- ❖ Potential best practices: the training and mentoring sessions detailed on page 30 of the update are well designed to build sensitive and effective leadership once employees are hired.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals
- ❖ This Challenge is especially daunting in that the recent reorganization involves central coordination across the Penn State system. The update for understandable reasons contains more information on University Park, but going forward the Challenge will be to make improvements at all campuses. Perhaps by inviting other locations to contribute their own points for the midterm update, reporting will be more inclusive. ***RESPONSE: Most campuses are actively supporting diversity. This is primarily a reporting issue. The Diversity Committee will work with the Associate Dean and Department Head for campus libraries and with the newly formed Assessment Council to clarify reporting expectations early this year and to design a better reporting mechanism.***