

**Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan**  
***A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009***  
**Development and Alumni Relations**

The Division of Development and Alumni Relations presents a strategic plan for diversity that is ambitious and contains explicit and specific goals under each Challenge. Of particular note is the \$50,000 Diversity Incentive Fund that has been developed as a mechanism to assist the Division in accomplishing its diversity goals. Also, accountability for specific goals extends throughout the organization, which is deemed vital to the success of its plan. The Division is commended for providing extensive metrics that define success and measurable objectives under various goals. What is not articulated is a mechanism to disseminate the Division's diversity plan to all responsible parties along with a charge to develop timelines, steps, and regular assessments for achieving the assigned goals. ***(RESPONSE: See page 4, Challenge 1: Goal 1B)*** Finally, the plan is well written, with crisp, tangible points without any extraneous material. The plan could serve as a model for other Penn State colleges and academic support units.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ The Division embraces a comprehensive and inclusive definition of diversity. The steps outlined in this Challenge should help to disseminate diversity information throughout the Division by utilizing a variety of approaches (i.e., staff orientation, a Web presence, professional development, encouragement of attendance at cultural activities, and the use of climate survey information).
- ❖ Although the definition of diversity is inclusive, a consistent application of the definition is not found throughout the plan. Much of the plan's focus is on gender and race/ethnicity. Greater inclusion of other groups (e.g., people with disabilities, LGBT individuals) at appropriate points throughout the plan would demonstrate that the Division has thoughtfully applied its definition to all underrepresented groups.  
***(RESPONSE: Where applicable within the plan, the individual differences highlighted in the Division's definition of diversity have been inserted to encourage staff, when working to fulfill these objectives, to consider the Division's full and broad definition of diversity.)***

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

- ❖ The Division shows exceptional creativity under this Challenge, e.g., including diversity talking points in Lion Ambassador tours; reviewing event locations, foods, and entertainment for future event planning; and developing programs to welcome diverse constituents. Further details for some points would be useful. For example, the addition of diversity-focused talking points for Lion Ambassador tour scripts (Goal 1F) is fairly clear, but plans to "work with" diverse alumni interest groups on improving the University climate (Goal 1E) are ambiguous. More details throughout would make an excellent plan even better (cf., Challenge 4: Goal 1, points A and B as examples of detailed and explicit planning).  
***(RESPONSE: See page 6, Challenge 2: Goal 1E)***
- ❖ One goal includes sharing best practices within the Division. The review team encourages the Division to develop a cross-pollination process where ideas, activities, and best practices are distributed among Division offices so that both sub-units can optimize their participation in the Division's diversity goals.  
***(RESPONSE: See page 7, Challenge 2: Goal 1G)***
- ❖ The goal of soliciting funds for Student Affairs programs and facilities is one that extends across several diversity Challenges and is highly encouraged; this type of collaboration is an example of the Division's potential impact on diversity for the University as a whole.
- ❖ Goal 4B could be improved by adding activities that contribute to a positive climate for other diversity constituents, such as for individuals with disabilities and the LGBT community. Collaborations with units like the Office for Disability Services and the LGTBTA Student Resource Center are encouraged.  
***(RESPONSE: See page 6, Challenge 2: Goal 1B)***

### **Representation (Access and Success)**

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

- ❖ The Development goals for diversity-related scholarships are ambitious and explicit. It would be useful to have these goals presented in the context of broader Development goals so as to better understand the place of diversity within the overall picture. (**RESPONSE: See page 9, Challenge 3: Goal 1B**)
- ❖ To address the limited information about the representation of diverse alumni among recruitment volunteers, the Division suggests the possibility of conducting a baseline survey of this group to determine its demographic composition on race, ethnicity, and gender. The Division's plan would be enhanced if other demographic considerations (e.g., members of the LGBT community and people with disabilities) were included. (**RESPONSE: See page 10, Challenge 3: Goal 2D**)

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

- ❖ The Division provides an honest appraisal of the low representation of staff of color in its workforce and has elicited recommendations from the Office of Affirmative Action on specific benchmarks. The Division's goal of 7.5 percent representation for staff of color falls short of Affirmative Action's recommendation of 9.5 percent (the average of the four categories provided by Affirmative Action), but achieving this goal would still comprise a significant increase over the current baseline of 5.5 percent. The Division is commended for pursuing this goal with rigor and precision, with its procedures serving as a University model and potential best practice.
- ❖ The Division reports the presence of 76 percent women in all positions, with 55 percent in leadership positions (Grade 26 or higher). This high percentage in positions of leadership is commended, but it is unclear whether or not the Division has retention mechanisms in place.
- ❖ Under Goal 2, the Division has a target for staff retention that is not specific to any group (e.g., women, staff of color), resulting in the idea that increased retention for all employees may also increase retention among underrepresented groups. However, in a *diversity* strategic plan, the emphasis is expected to be on retaining individuals from groups that comprise a diverse workforce, which, in turn, often benefits all employees. Further, developing a retention approach that emphasizes diverse groups allows for the selection of different targets for different groups, which is an appropriate strategy for the Division given the vast differences in representation among various groups. (**RESPONSE: See page 15, Challenge 4: Goal 2A**)

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ Challenge 5 is not an area that the Division typically works within and is not addressed in the plan; however, as indicated in the Division's response in the mid-point feedback report for the 1998-2003 *Framework* period, potential collaborations with academic units are not out of the question.

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ The Division has assessed the representation of diverse alumni on its committees and councils and has found them to be lacking in women and alumni of color. This honest appraisal has assisted its leaders in pinpointing goals for diversifying these areas. The Division also cites the critical relationship between diversity in the workforce and diverse alumni leadership.
- ❖ Though women have made significant inroads into leadership positions at the Grade 26 position and higher, after fall 2002, the Division lost its only woman administrator. No person of color occupied an administrative position during the 1998-2003 *Framework* period. For Grade 26 positions and higher during the same period, staff of color decreased in their representation from a high of 7.5 percent (3/40), which was better than their overall representation in the Division, to 3.8 percent (2/53), which is worse. These facts point to the need to redouble efforts to recruit *and* retain women and staff of color in leadership positions.

- ❖ The Division has set goals with specific guidelines for recruiting and retaining diverse leadership, though the emphasis appears to be on recruiting. More information on how the suggested interview questions and reference checks will have an impact on the diversity of Division leadership would be helpful. *(RESPONSE: See page 19, Challenge 6: Goal 2B)*

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

- ❖ The Diversity Committee's set of responsibilities, which may include guiding the implementation of the diversity strategic plan, is a proactive step and is encouraged by the review team. The impact of the committee's efforts should be evaluated and reported on at the mid-point progress report for the 2004-2009 *Framework*. *(RESPONSE: See page 20, Challenge 7: Goal 1C)*
- ❖ As indicated in the opening paragraph, the \$50,000 Diversity Incentive Fund is a bold step. In addition to funding promising initiatives, the Division may want to give careful consideration to using these funds to augment initiatives that have already shown good results. It is not clear whether or not the \$50,000 allocation will occur annually. *(RESPONSE: See page 21, Challenge 7: Goal 2A)*