

**Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan**  
***A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009***  
**Information Technology Services**

Given the ever-expanding role of technology in society and higher education, Information Technology Services (ITS) is strategically placed to make an increasingly significant contribution to the diversity goals of Penn State. ITS seems to take this responsibility seriously, as evidenced by the numerous diversity endeavors it sponsors in collaboration with other Penn State units.

The ITS diversity strategic plan reports on numerous ongoing initiatives from the 1998-2003 *Framework* period. Discussion of programs from previous planning periods should be limited to the assessment of their impact as the basis for future goals. Programs that have track records of demonstrated success based on concrete performance indicators (i.e., baselines, goals, measurable objectives, metrics, and outcomes) need to be continued. But for planning purposes, the emphasis should be on future goals and anticipated outcomes, not past outcomes. ITS' plan would be enhanced by the consistent use of this approach.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ Several plans under this Challenge continue initiatives from previous years, such as Web-based tutorials and support for Office of Human Resources programs. However, no demonstrable evidence is provided to support the success of these endeavors in the past, and operational goals for measuring them in the future are missing.

*Response: ITS researched and acquired these diversity tutorials. Data gathered shows that the general employee course "Diversity: What Employees Should Know" has been accessed 189 times for a duration of 248 hours. There have been 55 unique users of the employee course. The "Diversity: What Managers Should Know" course had been accessed 135 times for a duration of 72 hours. There have been 86 unique users of the management course. It should be the role of Affirmative Action and/or OHR to promote these tutorials.*

*We have been a participant of the Office of Human Resource's (OHR) Information Technology Training Program since it began 3 years ago. This program has had a total of 11 participants. We have sponsored 2 participants each summer and currently employ one of the sponsored participants in a full time position from this program.*

*Since ITS has an extremely low turn over in its staff assistant ranks there are virtually no opportunities to hire fresh young candidates through the Human Resource Staff Assistant Training Program. To show our support for this endeavor we provide free access to our computer labs for the program participants as well as free use of these labs for participant training programs. The Staff Assistant Training Program has been in existence since 1992. There have been 111 participants and 19 have been offered employment at the University. One program participant was offered a full time wage position with a University organization.*

- ❖ Two continuing diversity initiatives, the Diversity Newswire and the Diversity Events Calendar channel on the Penn State Portal, are noteworthy ITS accomplishments. Now that these initiatives are part of ITS' infrastructure, no information is provided on what additional efforts will be put into these programs beyond the typical maintenance for these types of systems.

*Response: As part of our infrastructure we provide the tools for the responsible offices to enhance their diversity efforts thru these initiatives (The Diversity Newswire and the Diversity Events Calendar).*

- ❖ ITS is commended for its plans to augment the role of the Diversity Committee and assess the effectiveness of the committee's educational programs. More specifics would be useful (e.g., expected attendance and results anticipated).

*Response: The Diversity Committee is meeting biweekly thru December 2004 and will meet monthly for the remainder of the academic year. Early initiatives include an assessment of OHR faculty/staff survey assessment and climate luncheon issues. Training sessions for all employees are being considered to include sexual harassment and sessions presented by Next Stage Inc., a theatre troupe that performs interactive scenarios on diversity topics.*

*The formation of the committee took into consideration gender, ethnicity and physical limitations, and includes representation from all ITS units.*

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

- ❖ In this section, ITS describes several current endeavors and, in a few cases, provides some data on program participation. However, program assessment and future planning are lacking.

*Response: We are once again continuing our partnership with the Office of Disability Services and the University Committee on Instructional Facilities to ensure the appropriate software and hardware is available for the University's efforts to assist employees and students with special needs. To support the Adaptive /Assistive technology needs of students located at the University Park Campus we have installed 60 computer devices (includes 50 large screen monitors) as well as 60 specialty desktops for those that are wheelchair bound. We have also funded 7 Windows workstations and 1 Macintosh workstation, along with all accompanying software and a Kurzweil 3000 reader in a partnership with the Office of Disability Services to provide an extended test facility for special needs students.*

*We also fund the equipment used in the Library Services Persons with Disability Lab in 23 W Pattee. This area has 10 specialized workstations with 7 different specialized software packages that address various special needs. There is also a Canon 5080 duplex scanner with document feeder. This device scanned over 105,000 pages last academic year.*

*We surveyed all Penn State non University Park locations (except Hershey and Penn College) for their adaptive/assistive technology needs. Fourteen campuses responded and will receive a large flat panel monitor for students with low vision this summer.*

*We are also continuing our financial support of the Office of Human Resources ONE program to defray the cost of OHR's sponsorship for the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Committee speaker series scheduled for October of 2004.. This committee tries to bring motivational speakers to the area to lend support to the local community members that are struggling with various disabilities. In addition, our Human Resource representative has been asked to participate on the ONE Advisory Board. As a result of ITS involvement with the ONE Program we provided a full time employment opportunity to a ONE program sponsored individual.*

- ❖ The plans for breakout sessions on diversity at the annual "all staff" meeting and the message from the vice provost on the ITS home page sound promising. Specific performance indicators would enhance these plans.

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

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

- ❖ Academic Computing Fellows, with appropriate assessment, has the potential to be a benchmark program for the University. It could also become a keystone for ITS' initiatives to diversify its workforce and leadership. More elaboration and careful planning would be helpful in meeting this goal.

*Response: The Academic Fellows Program has been carefully planned from the start. Entrance is administered and monitored by the Graduate School. Participants must meet the same Graduate School requirements for entry, as any other student would have to gain access to a graduate education and Penn State. We have had one individual leave the program prior to completing their degree. All the other individuals have completed the program and their coursework for their Ph. D. programs and moved on to careers at Penn State or other institutions of higher learning. Although this program was not initially designed as a diversity initiative, ITS and EOPC have partnered in this endeavor to sponsor one individual per year.*

- ❖ The computer recycling program shows promise. ITS is encouraged to expand this program to broaden its impact on diversity. For example, in addition to Educational Equity, some campuses might be strategically placed to distribute or utilize recycled computers for the benefit of diverse students, especially low-income students.

*Response: ITS will survey non-University Park campuses (except Hershey and Penn College) to determine the extent to which they can utilize these computers for low income students. We will also work with Educational Equity to increase the number of systems made available to University Park Students. We will provide an update in the next Framework update document.*

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

- ❖ As indicated in the ITS final report on the 1998-2003 *Framework*, achieving greater workforce diversity in the State College area has inherent challenges based on the regional demographic profile. Accordingly, strategic plans for this goal must be aggressive and detailed. While ITS has programs in place that could begin to address this need, more development, based on careful assessment, and new initiatives are encouraged.

*Response: The diversity committee will take on this task and see if they can develop some new ideas/approaches.*

- ❖ The plan to expand the Professional Development Program to other colleges and departments appears promising. Identification of concrete goals and action plans for the program would be helpful.

*Response: We will seek additional avenues to advertise our Professional Development Program including targeted list serves, the Commission for Women, the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity, the Commission of Lesbian Gay bisexual and Transgender Equity, and the Adult Learners Commission.*

*We will also work with other units that use Information Technology professionals to determine if there is an interest in developing a similar Professional Development Program in their areas. Our previous efforts to achieve this have not been successful.*

*Because of the success of the PDP Program within ITS, we will seek increased central funding for the expansion of this program.*

*We are evaluating how to offer an opportunity similar to the Professional Development Program for individuals that have left the University prior to completing their degree requirement and would like to return to the State College area. We will provide information on this topic in the next Framework update.*

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ This section is one of the strongest areas in ITS' plan and includes concrete goals, the use of data in program assessment, and a target date for the completion of a project. More performance indicators would enhance and refine planning in this area, but a good outline is now in place.

*Response: Data collected from the Pulse survey influenced the direction and content of the faculty seminars developed for Summer 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 as well as the categories for the MELD database. Data collected from follow-ups to seminar attendees and users of the database should validate diversity inclusions in Penn State class material.*

- ❖ The CHAD program could be dovetailed into a recruitment program for Penn State. If a recruiting goal is already a component of the program, this point should be stated explicitly in the plan along with specific strategies employed to attract program participants to Penn State, perhaps in collaboration with the Office of Minority Admissions and Community Affairs.

*Response: This program is a partnership with the College of Arts and Architecture. We will suggest that the College follow up on EOPC's suggestion to augment the CHAD program to become a recruitment program for Penn State.*

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ Given the low turnover rate at ITS, meeting this Challenge will also require concrete and aggressive strategies. While ITS promotes leadership and management training mechanisms, such as the Commission for Women activities, Educause's Frye Institute, and others, its efforts could be expanded, especially for those from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the "tone" of this section seems passive. ITS is encouraged to approach the difficulties associated with meeting this Challenge with the will to be visionary in articulating innovative approaches.

*Response: The ITS Diversity Committee will investigate the possibility of Gary Augustson serving as a mentor for the Administrative Fellows Program. We will also investigate sponsoring ITS staff from underrepresented groups for attending Leadership Center County. We will also continue to encourage ITS staff to prepare for entrance into the University's Administrative Fellows Program*

*We will continue to encourage ITS staff to attend diversity related training opportunities and activities.*

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

- ❖ ITS appears to be grappling with developing a clear and consistent strategy for this Challenge. Many of the initiatives presented in this section focus on Challenges 4 and 6. Those initiatives that directly address organizational change would be enhanced by developing more sufficient detail. ITS might benefit by consulting with the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment to improve its approach to this Challenge.

*Response: Since we are not an academic unit we do not have the ability to affect the recruitment and development of the minority student population on our own. Anything we do must be in conjunction with or developed for use by the academic departments at the University. As such we cannot control outcomes, or implementation practices and procedures. We can only provide the behind the scenes assistance with information technology ideas, infrastructure and implementation.*

*We hold orientation sessions for all new ITS employees multiple times per year. We will strengthen our current diversity component for these sessions.*