

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
Division of Student Affairs

The team applauds Vicky Triponey for her obvious new leadership regarding diversity initiatives in Student Affairs. This plan presents an intentional effort to move Student Affairs forward on diversity issues and concerns. The new Framework is representative of a thoughtful, strategic approach to individualization and enrichment of diversity themes. The focus of the new plan on action items appears to be balanced with continuing discussions and reflections on a broader understanding of diversity within the work group of student affairs directors and the new student advisory council. While the clear statement of action items is helpful, the Division is encouraged to add specific metrics to each of the action items in order that their effectiveness can be monitored. Further, while the examples of the new initiatives are encouraging, the team wonders if this is an inclusive list or if the Division will go beyond the examples mentioned.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The centralization of diversity strategy development is encouraged, and appears to be key to the integration of collective and collaborative efforts. The Review Team is still puzzled about the differentiation between types of units, and what this differentiation means in terms of diversity planning.
- ❖ The Review Team applauds the willingness to assess the impact of the Dialogues Program, but is concerned with the lack of metrics provided to evaluate its success.
- ❖ It is not clear how the effects of Action Strategy 2 will be assessed.
- ❖ The team is unsure of how to interpret “diversity advantaged behaviors” in Action Strategy 2 (page 5 of the plan). The team suggests clarification of this concept.
- ❖ The Review Team applauds the value-based Code of Ethics developed by the Division. It would be helpful to include consequences for violating the code.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The “We Are” campaign holds promise as a manner in which to promote civility among groups of all kinds and the team applauds the plan to expand the campaign to all Penn State locations.
- ❖ New initiatives that target the refinement of existing data are a welcome addition to the framework and central to its success. The Review team encourages the addition of new data, as well.
- ❖ The significant role of staff on the Centre county Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force, and on the University’s Coalition to Address Relationship and Sexual Violence is commendable and is a potential best practice. The Review team suggests that this involvement be recognized in performance evaluations and awards.
- ❖ There is no explicit plan for assessing and improving the climate for staff. The Division should consider a process by which staff climate issues could be identified and addressed.
- ❖ The Review Team notes the lack of metrics for the proposed action items.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The additional efforts to improve the effectiveness of the first-year experience are noted.
- ❖ It is not clear what effect repositioning of staff will have on recruitment and retention of diverse students.
- ❖ While one initiative example is to “provide skills development opportunities related to diversity for all students,” a very narrow program of diversity training for student leaders is discussed. These seem at odds.
- ❖ “Urban Service Adventure” appears to be a potential best practice.
- ❖ The Review Team applauds the construction of a student-focused framework.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The plan does not address the disturbing nature of the demographic data for the Division.
- ❖ The potential increase in the number of mandatory hours of diversity training is commendable.
- ❖ The investment in a NASPA Minority Fellow is commendable and promising.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ While the plan proposes to assess the efficacy of co-curricular programs, there is no indication of how this will be accomplished.
- ❖ A positive is the proposal to develop modules for the first-year seminars that would include diversity issues. Again, there are no metrics included for assessing the effectiveness of these modules.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The plan to implement a mentoring project for “diverse” staff and to promote careers in student affairs to minority students is positive. Missing is a plan to assess the effectiveness of these projects.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The plan proposes several organizational enhancements (the Greek system, technology, partnerships), but does not indicate how these would support the Division’s diversity goals.
- ❖ As noted in several of the other challenges, the plan does not include metrics for the evaluation of these proposed activities.