

**Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan**  
**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009**  
**Undergraduate Education and International Programs**

Undergraduate Education and International Programs (UEIP) provides in its diversity strategic plan an excellent outline and list of strategies through 2009. The tables that display goals, actions, individual or sub-unit responsibilities, measures of success, and timelines make for an impressive presentation of UEIP plans. If all or even most of the identified strategies are implemented and assessed, UEIP will have available a rich reservoir of information about its progress towards its diversity goals. Given UEIP's critical role within the University, achieving these initiatives will have a significant and positive impact upon Penn State's overall diversity goals.

A clear strength of the plan is UEIP's intent to measure the success of its diversity initiatives. Some measures are ambitious and explicit, for example, "increase the number of students studying abroad by 5 percent each year" (Challenge 5). Others, such as "increase the number of short-term programs" (Challenge 5), don't establish a specific threshold for success. Some measures, though explicit, appear limited, such as the one that defines success as a 1 percent annual increase in the number of underrepresented employees within UEIP (Challenge 4). In some instances, instead of the desired outcomes, the success of the process is measured, e.g., "more than 50% of UEIP employees will complete the climate survey" (Challenge 1). This approach doesn't measure an improvement in climate, just that most UEIP employees will complete the survey. Refining the measures would make a good plan even better.

Finally, the review team identified one of UEIP's goals, "increase awareness of diversity education and issues among those with responsibility for undergraduate education in the colleges" (Challenge 1), as an area where UEIP could play a decisive role in advancing the University's diversity mission. The plan to include diversity issues on the agenda of ACUE meetings at least once a year is a good beginning. Could additional influence be used in working with the Faculty Senate UEIP mentions upcoming work with the Senate on the GI requirement and is commended for these plans. UEIP is encouraged to develop other action items in its work with the Senate and Senate committees that will have a positive effect on diversity-related issues. **RESPONSE: UEIP will look for additional ways to work collaboratively with the Faculty Senate on issues of diversity in addition to the current initiative of revisions to the GI requirement.**

### **Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ The plan includes several appropriate strategies focused on providing all UEIP employees, along with ACUE members, with information about diversity goals and values for the University. Assessment measures focus on staff participation in activities instead of determining the extent to which employees can articulate their understanding of these important goals and values. Evaluating outcomes from planned processes would enhance UEIP's approach to program assessment. **RESPONSE: Our first goal is to increase participation among UEIP employees; it is not possible for understanding, knowledge and sensitivity to issues of diversity to increase and expand without participation. We agree however, that it would be reasonable to consider alternative methods of evaluation.**
- ❖ UEIP offers the suggestion that a single definition of diversity would serve the University well; this suggestion is worth considering. **RESPONSE: We will have to wait for others to "adopt" a single definition, in the meantime we will make sure all staff in UEIP are aware of our definition.**
- ❖ The goal concerning "monitor and assess our climate within UEIP . . ." would appear to be better placed under Challenge 2. **RESPONSE: We will move this item to Challenge 2.**
- ❖ The review team hopes that UEIP's plans for augmenting diversity education in the "colleges" include both UP and campus colleges. **RESPONSE: Yes, we do intend to include campus colleges as well as UP colleges.**

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

- ❖ Developing an operational definition of climate could facilitate the overall context for establishing goals and measuring success under this Challenge. **RESPONSE: Again – a University wide definition of climate would make sense.**

- ❖ Several strategies are identified to support the goals for this section and appear to be appropriate and doable.
- ❖ Assessment plans are specific and, in combination with climate survey results, promise to help UEIP develop an ongoing understanding of its progress in this area.

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

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

- ❖ UEIP has numerous goals that provide important direction for planning through 2009. However, two ongoing areas of strength are not included under this Challenge: (1) leadership in diversity education through academic advising programs and (2) leadership through IP activities. ***RESPONSE: We will continue to provide coordination, cooperation and support, related to advising, through our activities in DUS and the Advising Council. We will also continue to enhance and expand the current initiatives of the Office of International Programs and the role they can play in recruiting and retaining a diverse student body.***
- ❖ The goal, “provide a supportive environment to new students and parents from diverse backgrounds . . . ,” is commendable.
- ❖ For some items under this Challenge, more details would be helpful. For example, what is the mission or charge to the First Year Experience Committee? ***RESPONSE: The charge to the First Year Experience Committee is attached as a separate document.*** Also, UEIP reports that the committee will “review, enhance, and coordinate with other units the messages of the first year experience . . .” What specific activities will constitute these efforts? ***RESPONSE: The committee is working to develop a “road map” of the important messages to first-year students that will help them have a successful and rewarding first year. Messages are to be coordinated and collaborated by multiple units of the university. To date the committee has revised the welcoming to the FTCAP program, revised the New Student Convocation, and developed a unifying logo ( It’s Your Time, Make First Year Count) to be used to visually tie messages and venues together. All of these efforts have been done with issues of diversity in mind. The committee continues to expand it’s undertakings and continues to build additional partnerships within the University.***

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

- ❖ The actions listed for this challenge seem appropriately proactive. UEIP may wish to consider partnering with other units in the University to develop connections with Historically Black Colleges and Universities or Hispanic Serving Institutions for recruitment purposes. Additionally, UEIP could consider a “grow your own” internship program to provide diverse Penn State students with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to UEIP’s mission for potential future employment. ***RESPONSE: We will explore those possible relationships.***
- ❖ Planned measurement strategies promise to provide UEIP with important longitudinal information about the strengths and weaknesses of each action.

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ The goals and action steps presented in this section are comprehensive and well thought out. The planned assessment activities will yield information about trends, and the development of the minor in civic and community engagement will be a noteworthy accomplishment.
- ❖ Some of the “Measures for Success” here (i.e., bullets 1 and 3 under the second goal) measure the utilization of appropriate methods for measuring outcomes, not the desired outcomes themselves. ***RESPONSE: The second goal under Challenge 5 is to increase the opportunity for our students to have greater understanding of multiculturalism within the United States. It is our role to facilitate that by providing more opportunities such as having SITE sponsor conversations to assist faculty in their teaching; to provide workshops for teaching faculty; and expand public scholarship initiatives. The outcomes are to have more faculty integrate multicultural aspects of the US into their classes.***

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ Actions associated with the first goal (“hire and promote . . .”) seem to be geared more towards Challenge 4. Diversifying leadership typically requires more sophisticated actions than for staff in general.  
***RESPONSE: This goal is specific to hiring more leaders within the unit, rather than simply diversifying the staff. We want to work closely with Human Resources to proactively expand the potential pool of candidates when hiring for leadership positions.***
- ❖ This section of the plan would be stronger by creating two separate goals from the second goal (“identify and develop . . .”). This approach would enable the articulation of strategies specific for “identifying” individuals with leadership potential and for “developing” leadership opportunities. ***RESPONSE: Agreed, we will separate this goal into two goals: 1) Identify leadership potential within the current structure of the unit and 2) put into place, methods to develop leadership from within. Action item for the identification goal – directors will report to the Vice Provost each year, those persons in their respective units who are exhibiting leadership qualities. Measure of success – at least one person from each unit is identified by the respective director each year. Actions 1,2 and 3s will remain for the ‘develop’ goal as will the measures of success.***

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

- ❖ The goals listed in this section are important for supporting the University’s diversity goals, and some actions address organizational change and budget reallocation. More details at various points would better explain the goals under this Challenge.
- ❖ UEIP has the potential to make extraordinary contributions towards Penn State’s diversity goals under this Challenge. The Schreyer Institute, FTCAP, and ROTC are a few examples of places where organizational change could influence diversity across the University. At this time, the plan appears underdeveloped for this Challenge. UEIP is encouraged to critically assess its understanding of how organizational change is related to diversity accomplishment and to apply insights gained from doing so to as many areas of UEIP’s organizational structure and influence as possible. Consultation with the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment and Educational Equity may assist UEIP in this process.  
***RESPONSE: We will consider these suggestions seriously and consult with the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment.***

**NOTE: Committee expanded to include Cynthia Hall (University Relations) and Patrick Smith (Enrollment Management and Administration).**

*Inter-Office Correspondence*

**Date:** *November 24, 2003*

**From:** *Janis E. Jacobs, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and International Programs  
Vicky L. Triponey, Vice President for Student Affairs*

**To:** *Philip J. Burlingame, Co-chair                      Linda C. Higginson  
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**Re:** *First Year Experience Steering Committee*

*Thank you for agreeing to serve on a Steering Committee to review the first year experience for all new students at Penn State and to make recommendations for appropriate change. We all agree that the transition to college and the first year experience are critical to college student success and Penn State has many activities, publications, and events aimed at first year students to help students during this critical year. However, we do not always do a good job of coordinating these activities and publications for content, coherence, and consistency. It is our intent to have our offices jointly focus on the relevant issues that are central to assisting new students at Penn State, and we believe that this can best be accomplished by having a steering committee that represents a variety of perspectives review existing practices and work together to create new models. Philip Burlingame, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, and Don Leslie, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, have graciously agreed to serve as co-chairs of the Steering Committee.*

*The Steering Committee will have responsibility to review all current practices and determine where and when current messages are appropriate and where and when revised or new messages and information should be provided to assure the most positive and comprehensive first year experience for all entering students. We expect this to be an on-going committee that will have the authority to make decisions, in collaboration with stakeholders, to determine future directions for the communications and events that the University provides for first year students. We expect the First Year Experience Steering Committee to, on an annual basis, review current and best practices of the first year experience and make necessary adjustments to a comprehensive plan and programs which enhance a new student's successful academic, social and cultural transition to Penn State.*

*We believe that the appropriate place for the Steering Committee to begin is with the messages that we, as a University, are trying to send to first year students. During the first year at Penn State, new students are given much information and receive many messages, however, those messages are often disconnected and not part of a comprehensive and planned first year experience. We expect the Steering Committee, with appropriate input from others, to develop a set of coherent and unified messages for students as they enter the University. Once a set of messages has been identified, we expect the Steering Committee to review various components of the first year experience, meet with relevant stakeholders, and develop strategies and structures*

*to ensure that each student receives the information in a way that will facilitate a successful transition to Penn State.*

*Although we expect the First Year Experience Steering Committee to be an on-going effort that will continue to review and change various components of the first year experience, we believe that the following issues should be addressed during this academic year:*

- 1. Determine which messages are important to be delivered to new students and the appropriate time and venue for delivery of those messages.*
- 2. Decide which programs to target for immediate change for the 2004-05 academic year.*
- 3. Review current materials (both printed and electronic) that are provided to entering students that will be relevant for targeted programs.*
- 4. Review targeted programs and meet with stakeholders for those programs.*
- 5. Make recommendations for change/improvement in targeted programs to be implemented during the Summer/Fall 2004 by the end of March 2004.*
- 6. Develop a plan for reviewing other programs and evaluating changes in the future that will ensure a consistent, relevant and vibrant first year experience for all new Penn State students.*

*Thank you for your participation in this effort. We look forward to discussing these ideas with you at your first meeting.*

*cc: Rodney A. Erickson*