

**Feedback on Progress Implementing**  
**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09**  
**Penn State Outreach**  
**Mid-Term Progress Report**  
**Spring 2007**

Penn State Outreach has some commendable diversity structures and programs in place that have outstanding potential. These structures include the Outreach Diversity Council; a history of conducting climate surveys at 3-5 year intervals; an exit interview process to identify climate issues; a substantial diversity recruitment and hiring fund; high-quality diversity programming through WPSU, such as “A World of Difference”; the Vice President’s Award for Diversity; and a diversity strategic plan format that lends itself to continuous follow up and status reporting. The value of these structures would be significantly enhanced by developing better measures to gauge success and reporting progress against these measures. For example, it would be useful to see a detailed report of the results of the 2006 climate survey compared to previous climate surveys and measured against specific thresholds that Outreach defines as “success” for key climate indicators. Also, more information on some of Outreach’s flagship programs, such as more details on the activities and impact of the Outreach Diversity Council, would be helpful.

Efforts are still required in diversifying the Unit’s staff and faculty and going beyond the strong focus on adult learners. In general, the review team recommends that Outreach take a more assertive stance in its diversity efforts by making better progress on initiatives that are currently still in the planning phases. Although it appears Outreach is moving forward in some areas, there were several sections of the diversity strategic plan where little or no progress had been made since 2004, specifically in Challenges 5 through 7, which was also noted in the last review. A more specific and detail-oriented report would prove helpful for the next review.

***RESPONSE: We agree that although Outreach has made some progress on diversity related initiatives, a more assertive stance is needed. Since the submission of this report, analysis of the climate survey has been completed and shared with Outreach leadership. Unit leaders have been charged with developing action plans to address challenges outlined in the climate survey by January 2008. In addition, several sections of the diversity strategic plan that were in the planning stages are being completed; for example, guidelines for Outreach recruitment have been developed, approved and implemented July 2007. Dr. Weidemann is also charging each unit leader within Outreach to implement and support the completion of the initiatives outlined in the diversity strategic plan. In addition, we agree that developing key climate indicators and reporting impact of the Council would be useful in evaluating the effectiveness of Outreach’s diversity efforts***

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ The review team is pleased to learn about the further development and implementation of the Outreach Diversity Council. The broad representation, meeting schedule, and Council charge, as well as the examples demonstrating the impact of the Council, represent a strong beginning. Outreach is encouraged to place information about the Council (including committee membership, charge, and 2007 priorities) prominently on the Outreach Web site.
- ❖ Various diversity communication initiatives and programming are noted. Reporting feedback and evaluation comments from diversity program attendees would be useful.
- ❖ The review team encourages future reports to use more precise language when reporting achievements. Umbrella terms, such as “diversity clientele,” can make assessment difficult.

***RESPONSE: We agree that reporting feedback and evaluation comments would be useful, and Outreach Professional Development and the Outreach Diversity Council are now collecting evaluation data.***

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

- ❖ Outreach is commended for conducting its fourth climate survey (1995, 2000, 2003, and 2006). Although limited survey results were available in time for the update, the team encourages the Unit to provide

comprehensive results for the final report, especially since this recommendation was part of the Feedback Report for Outreach's 1998-2003 *Framework* final report.

- ❖ More specific data concerning the targeting and participation of multicultural groups in programming for K-12 youth are needed to assess the success of this programming in serving these populations.
- ❖ Outreach is acknowledged for its efforts to promote unit and individual approaches to implement "no tolerance" practices for any type of discrimination. Some additional documentation on the outcomes of the Public Broadcasting forums and the Justice and Safety Institute climate survey would be informative.

***RESPONSE: The results of the 2006 climate survey have been analyzed and shared with Outreach leadership and will be shared with all staff by August 2007.***

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

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

- ❖ An extensive list of initiatives and collaborations are presented. However, it is noted that 2002 data are used to define some of the demographic characteristics of the online student population. With the rapidly changing online higher education environment, more contemporaneous data should be used to help frame strategies, measures, and initiatives.
- ❖ The review team notes, as did the Feedback Report for Outreach's 2004-09 diversity strategic plan, a strong focus on adult learners, and to a lesser extent international students and rural underserved populations. While the team recognizes the importance of the part-time adult learner population to Outreach, other non-traditional and diverse student populations warrant additional attention.
- ❖ There appears to be only limited progress in the update for strategic plan items 7-10.
- ❖ The Feedback Report for Outreach's 2004-09 diversity strategic plan praised the proposed development of a World Campus diversity *Framework*, so it is disappointing to see such little progress in this area.

***RESPONSE: We concur with the need to develop more contemporaneous data and measures to define the demographics of the population of adult learners Outreach serves. We will be working on defining and developing measures to accurately reflect these populations.***

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

- ❖ Outreach acknowledges challenges and concerns about recruiting ethnically and racially diverse staff. It is especially worrisome that there is no racial/ethnic diversity among the Outreach faculty. The team encourages more innovative and comprehensive strategies, measures, and action plans to address this deficit.
- ❖ The Unit's update indicates minimal progress in strategic plan items 11-15. While some strategies have been implemented (11, 12, 14), the review team sees little in the way of tangible outcomes, especially in relation to recruitment. For example, for 12, how are the recruitment funds being utilized and what are the outcomes from the investment of resources?
- ❖ Minimal information and data are provided on the status of retention initiatives and successes. The review team noted that the Outreach Diversity Council will focus on retention planning in the coming months.

***RESPONSE: We agree that recruiting ethnically and racially diverse staff is a challenge. Recruitment guidelines have been developed, approved, and implemented effective July 2007 in an attempt to address this challenge. Outreach leadership is supporting a mandatory requirement to have all search committee members complete Penn State's "Hire Power" training. The recruitment and retention committee of the Council will be tracking recruitment efforts in 2007-08 and begin work on retention strategies.***

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ It appears that limited progress has been made since 2004, though the "Common Ground Lobby Talk" appears promising. Plans are still being developed to review the Outreach program portfolio, and data are still being gathered on Outreach's diversity-related educational programs. Per diversity strategic plan item 17, some funding changes have been made, but the changes do not appear to focus on diversity-related programs.

- ❖ There is a substantial array of courses with diversity content offered through Continuing Education and the World Campus. Outreach may want to consider offering courses that address LGBT content and additional diverse populations.
- ❖ It is recommended that Outreach continue to measure the success of these curricular initiatives and report findings in the final report.

*RESPONSE: We agree with the review team's recommendation that more attention needs to be dedicated toward evaluating the Outreach diversity-related educational program portfolio. Beginning in the spring 2007, the Council's program committee began a comprehensive effort to identify diversity-related educational programming offered across Outreach units. As part of this effort, identifying courses that need to be added, such as those with LGBT content, will be identified. The results of this study will be included in the final report.*

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ It would be beneficial to know how Unit leaders, in addition to the vice president for Outreach, are actively involved in diversity efforts beyond encouraging staff to attend programs.
- ❖ The 2004 review of the current diversity strategic plan stated that "the current goal of 'encouragement and support' for this Challenge needs further development and a more aggressive posture." This suggestion is reiterated at this review as it appears that no substantial progress has occurred since 2004.
- ❖ While the changes to the interviewing and hiring process as stated in strategic plan item 20/21 are positive, Outreach is encouraged to develop more assertive goals.
- ❖ The addition of "succession planning" to the Outreach SRDP is a promising strategy and another mechanism for "growing" leadership internally. The review team encourages Outreach to collect data on this initiative.

*RESPONSE: In July 2007, Outreach has new leadership in several key work units and unit leaders have refocused efforts on diversity. Dr. Weidemann charged all unit leaders to refocus diversity related efforts to be more aggressive and action oriented, and supported the appointment of a director that will lead diversity initiatives. Financial support of diversity initiatives has also increased in 2007-08.*

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

- ❖ It appears that little progress has been made since 2004, including on the annual update of diversity. It is unclear how the networking efforts have resulted in any shared best practices or collaborative efforts to foster diversity.
- ❖ It would be beneficial for Outreach to develop a system of accountability that supports the achievement of diversity goals.