

**Feedback on Progress Implementing**  
**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009**  
**Research and the Graduate School**  
**Mid-Term Progress Report**  
**Spring 2007**

The various updates from Research and Graduate School (R&G) appear comprehensive and indicate a solid commitment to diversity. It is particularly commendable that R&G extends diversity strategic planning and responsibilities down to its major sub-divisions, though this approach contributed to some unevenness within the overall update. For example, it appears that the main section of the update does not explicitly address the assessment questions posed in the *Framework*, nor does it identify the current status of specific points from the R&G diversity strategic plan. On the other hand, the Applied Research Lab (ARL) section answers *Framework* questions and provides a progress report on strategies identified in the ARL strategic plan. The Penn State Great Valley (PSGV) section also reports on the current status of some of their targeted areas of improvement since 2004. While variation in reporting style among the divisions is understandable, for future updates the review team recommends that the main section be structured more like ARL's update.

R&G would be well served by consistently employing a broad approach to diversity throughout its endeavors. Additionally, because departmental politics and hierarchies affect underrepresented/underserved graduate students quite differently than they do undergraduates and mainstream graduate students, these students would benefit greatly from R&G initiatives focused on addressing their specific needs. Moreover, given R&G's overarching role across the University, it can provide leadership within Penn State in developing procedures that enhance the inclusion of underrepresented/underserved populations in data gathering, recruiting, hiring, and admissions.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ R&G deals with a large international community and has developed creative ways for enhancing inclusiveness for people with greatly varying cultures, languages, etc. The review team commends the efforts employed, such as soliciting for feedback/suggestions to address the needs of various groups, viewings of the video created by the Office of Research Protections, and the numerous efforts put forth by the Human Resources Manager, all of which are effective in increasing the understanding of diversity.
- ❖ The specific inclusion of "transgendered" in R&G's definition of diversity is noteworthy, but its context within "genders" is problematic since gender is almost universally defined in a binary manner. Designating "gender identities" as its own category would be clearer and more inclusive.

***RESPONSE: Research and the Graduate School will define genders with the appropriate language in all of its future documents and reports.***

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

- ❖ The practice of sponsoring multidisciplinary research and programming (workshops, lectures, etc.) with a diversity slant and implementing suggestions that are solicited at such events shows promise for improving the climate; thus, actual climate surveys will be of particular use (now slated for PSGV and ARL).
- ❖ R&G's strategy of "zeroing in on the [climate] issues identified by the University as a whole" seems efficient and wise; the review team encourages consultation with the Commissions for equity (CFW, CORED, and CLGBTE) for advice on climate issues.
- ❖ R&G is encouraged to further address this Challenge by developing integrated social and academic opportunities focused on improving faculty-student relationships and encouraging cross-disciplinary relationships among graduate students. Closer collaboration between the director of Graduate Educational Equity and the associate dean of Graduate Student Affairs is recommended.

***RESPONSE: The suggestion of closer collaboration between the Senior Director of Graduate Educational Equity Programs and the associate dean of Graduate Student Affairs is appreciated but the***

*graduate school environment makes implementing the suggestion more complex than it would appear. Graduate education is decentralized and our efforts would be duplicative and even sometimes negatively received if we followed this recommendation without being sensitive to the community's ability to absorb additional workshops. Our senior director of Graduate Educational Equity Programs serves on the Graduate Council subcommittee with our associate dean who works with students issues/affairs. This committee does discuss possible workshops to address diversity issues and how we can reach more graduate students with our programs. In addition, our current workshops, though targeting underrepresented graduate students, are open to all students and faculty members.*

- ❖ Continuing support of community women- and minority-owned businesses, proactive hiring practices of employees with disabilities (Ben Franklin Technology Center), purposeful inclusion of wide-ranging perspectives in research publications, linkages with associations of diverse groups (e.g., Hispanic Engineers group), and mentoring programs (ARL) all contribute to a more inclusive, welcoming climate.
- ❖ The Electro-Optics Center (EOC) is encouraged to proceed with plans for a multicultural director or diversity committee and to solicit and respond to climate feedback from its employees.  
*RESPONSE: There is really no need at this time for the Electro-Optics Center to have a separate multicultural director. This work should be folded into the Defense Related Research Unit (DRRU) of which the Applied Research Laboratory (ARL) is also a part. We might consider a diversity committee for the Electro-Optics Center. If the need for such a position becomes more relevant down the road, R&G will give it more consideration.*
- ❖ There appears to be no formal diversity awareness training for the graduate student community. R&G should implement programming (e.g., workshops and seminars) encouraging broad participation (including the colleges), to enhance communication with and understanding among students, colleagues, advisors, and administrators.  
*RESPONSE: Diversity awareness programs needs to be done on site in each unit. The cultures of these very specific units do not lend themselves to fitting into a generic diversity strategy. In addition, they are in no way similar to undergraduate environments. Our diversity council provides some guidance to all of the units, but relies on the various units to determine what works best in the environment in question.*

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

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

- ❖ Efforts to address this Challenge appear focused on a few ethnic backgrounds. With a high number of international students, an ethnically diverse student body is a reality among graduate students; efforts to further recruit these and other underrepresented/underserved groups should be continued and expanded.  
*RESPONSE: R&G presently have a major international effort underway. We will assess the results once the new initiatives have had time to make an impact.*
- ❖ The review team appreciates the inclusion of longitudinal data tables to assess efforts; however, the data include only three racial/ethnic groups with no gender breakdowns. The team was surprised that similar data presentations were not found under other Challenges (or in an appendix that represented demographics for all constituents of R&G). Future reports should contain more of such data to aid assessment.  
*RESPONSE: Additional data have been added to the diversity framework. These data now reflect the numbers of underrepresented students and the numbers of total graduate students so that one might make comparisons. We will also add more data in coming years of the update, reflecting gender as well.*
- ❖ For PSGV, collaborations with INROADS, local HBCUs, the Navy Yard, etc. are commendable as is the leadership in providing diversity training for the community and local businesses. The same can be said of ARL's formal agreements with HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions.
- ❖ R&G is encouraged to create more opportunities for engagement among the graduate student community and to communicate the importance for faculty and researchers to be supportive of these efforts.  
*RESPONSE: R&G is presently very engaged with the graduate student community and continuously getting more support from faculty and researchers. We have workshops, coffees, exhibitions, the Professional Development and Retention and the Achievement conferences as well as many social events. Adding more than the community can absorb would cause the events to be undersubscribed and counterproductive. One question we will continue to ask is, "Is there a healthy graduate community*

*embedded within the programs?" These answers will vary based on the units questioned. Our student organizations are critical partners in helping us gauge the health of the graduate community.*

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

- ❖ R&G is commended for several endeavors under this Challenge, including family-friendly work policies; attention to detail and pursuit of diversity in hiring practices, particularly with respect to women; routine inspection of the work environment to assess safety and ergonomic standards; and creativity in providing employee assistance, though more data would be useful in this area. It is gratifying to see recruitment, advertising, and a Penn State presence in such an array of venues.
- ❖ Perhaps EOC could explore some internship programs to address the necessity for specialized training.
- ❖ At PSGV, the position upgrade program is laudable and the results achieved are impressive.
- ❖ The review team suggests consulting with the Commissions for equity and the various diversity-related resource centers to identify further avenues for recruiting diverse faculty and staff.

***RESPONSE: This is an excellent suggestion.***

#### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ The interdisciplinary and collaborative programs are obviously successful and promote rapid progress. More of these types of programs are encouraged.
- ❖ For PSGV, the CE and community/business courses/workshops are a great asset and should be expanded. Less clear is how well a comprehensive approach to diversity is addressed in the graduate education curriculum.

***RESPONSE: Graduate curriculum is very different than undergraduate curriculum. There is no general education for graduate education and departments and programs have very specific needs to meet accreditation requirements as well as research and teaching needs.***

#### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ R&G has increasingly diversified its leadership positions, and employee development opportunities are readily available and encouraged, particularly for women. It is less clear whether or not ARL has had similar success, so professional development may need to be more strongly emphasized.
- ❖ PSGV is encouraged to continue its efforts to hire and promote underrepresented/underserved groups for leadership positions, though it is noted that not as many such positions are available.
- ❖ The review team encourages the implementation of structures and events to acknowledge individuals for leadership, service, and enhancement of diversity.

***RESPONSE: We believe that we are addressing recognition of leadership through our staff awards programs. Each year, over 200 people attend this event. This attendance record suggests that we are successful in recognizing our leaders.***

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

- ❖ Among the Diversity Council, Graduate Educational Equity, and smaller diversity committees, it appears there are sufficient structures and resources to monitor and coordinate the desired diversity goals. What are the common priorities? Which strategies are most effective? These are the types of questions that should be continuously posed.
- ❖ The Huck Institute's exemplary diversity efforts should be replicated across all R&G units.
- ❖ For PSGV, the Delaware Valley Diversity Leadership Academy is a great example of expanding diversity awareness beyond the campuses and research facilities.