

**Feedback on Final Update on Progress Implementing  
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09  
Penn State Abington  
Spring 2010**

It is obvious that Penn State Abington College has put considerable thought, time, and efforts into creating a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students. Efforts to document implementation and track progress are commendable. Although Abington's diversity efforts have not always been successful, there has been honest and open discussion about the implementation, which is also commendable, as is the Diversity Strategic Planning Committee's self-assessment review conducted as the update was compiled. The comments and recommendations were insightful and many were addressed in the 2010-15 plan. The review team did note, however, that more of the recommendations could have been incorporated to strengthen the 2010-15 plan. **RESPONSE: *The DSP Committee very intentionally created a plan that was too not unwieldy. They strategically decided to target fewer priorities at a high level of quality and thoroughness, rather than attempt too many initiatives, and spread efforts too thin, resulting in an outcome of lower quality and effectiveness.***

The growth in gender and racial/ethnic diversity at the College is impressive, but equal attention to other underrepresented/underserved groups was not always apparent. More attention to additional diverse student, faculty, and staff groups, such as adult learners and Go 60 students, first generation low income students, individuals with a disability, members of the LGBT community, and other populations beyond race/ethnicity and gender, is encouraged. **RESPONSE: *The DSP Committee agrees that in the future we need to hone in on other types of diversity data, however also recognizes that some of this data is difficult to obtain due to confidentiality and disclosure issues (as an example: sexual orientation). The committee wishes to emphasize that our definition of diversity and our response to diversity at the college does include the broader definition of diversity, despite the difficulty of obtaining some of the data.***

While the statistics cited in participation and growth were often notable, in many instances there was insufficient context and no baseline by which to judge their importance. **RESPONSE: *This is a baffling comment. It was the DSP Committee's understanding that the baseline data would be from year 2004, then compare changes and trends (or not) from years 2005 to 2009.***

The College's commitment to diversity in its proposals for University-wide recognitions and its selection of commencement speakers are impressive.

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

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

- ❖ The growth, in number and percentage, of intercultural and multicultural activities is remarkable. A point of concern is the note that the quality of these activities needs to be monitored. Who defines "quality" and how "quality" is defined should be addressed. **RESPONSE: *Quality is subjective and is a term that will be avoided in future reports. The committee will find alternate definitions and make these definitions clear.***
- ❖ The review team concurs with the recommendation to create a more attractive and prominent Web presence of the Office of Intercultural Affairs. **RESPONSE: *The Abington website is in the process of being rebuilt.***
- ❖ There is an excellent variety of diversity-related groups and activities for students. It is commendable that the College recognizes there are additional under-represented groups with little voice on campus. Equally commendable is the College's willingness to initiate clubs and organizations for three additional groups.
- ❖ The College's annual re-commitment to the "No Place for Hate" campaign is laudable. Abington's place as a pioneer in the "No Place for Hate" campaign is a potential best practice, pending outcomes substantiated by the assessment data.

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

- ❖ Each of the Diversity Climate Survey and University-wide 2008 Faculty/Staff Survey corroborated the findings of the other, which was excellent. Indicating the number of respondents to each survey and cohort demographic percentages would provide more meaning to the results. ***RESPONSE: The DSP Committee has the data on number of respondents and will incorporate both number and percentages into the next report.*** Explanation of why the new Diversity Climate Survey was not administered would be helpful. ***RESPONSE: The survey was not conducted for budgetary reasons as it was being administered externally. The new survey has been developed in-house and in an electronic format which makes the survey significantly easier and more affordable to administer.***
- ❖ Allowing Diversity Climate Survey respondents to self-identify mental, emotional or physical disabilities is positive.
- ❖ The update committee concluded that the Diversity Workshops generated “a tremendous amount of interest and enthusiasm” that and the initiative would benefit from greater support from the unit administrators, particularly in releasing their faculty and staff to attend the workshops. More information about why unit administrators had difficulties releasing employees to attend the events will be helpful. ***RESPONSE: Again, for budgetary and staff coverage reasons.***

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

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

- ❖ Retention efforts seem to be limited to the Learning Center and the Equal Opportunity Programs. Data cited in these sections related only to those units; there is no information on retention efforts for members of underrepresented groups who do not seek help or do not qualify for the programs. ***RESPONSE: The Summer Bridge Program and a number of strategies (small and large) by the Enrollment Management and Retention Committee have addressed/solved targeted retention issues. Moreover, the Bond of Brothers pilot program addresses the retention of African American and Hispanic males. The EOP Coordinator position is being reconfigured to focus primarily on retention issues.***
- ❖ The Pedagogy Committee’s Retention Survey conducted in the spring 2009 is a thoughtful strategy to understand the issues about sophomore retention.
- ❖ The College’s commitment to expanding international programming is commendable, and also relevant to Challenges 5 and 7.

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

- ❖ It is understood that a relatively stable faculty and staff can make diversifying the workforce difficult, and it is evident that efforts have been made to recruit members of underrepresented groups for both faculty and staff searches. ***RESPONSE: The three academic division heads just conducted a large number of searches to fill tenure-line positions and were diligent in interviewing minority candidates. Of the eight new tenure-track hires, two were females (one in a discipline where women are under-represented) and three were minorities and/or internationals (German female, Iranian female, Canadian/Hispanic male).***
- ❖ The practice that search committees for faculty and staff hires work closely with the Office of Human Resources and attend a teleconference hosted by Affirmative Action is positive.
- ❖ The attention paid to addressing recruitment practices through search committee composition and training is impressive. The suggestion that faculty and staff exit interviews be implemented is a good one. ***RESPONSE: Outgoing, retiring tenure-track faculty were interviewed this past spring by the College ombudsman to assess their perceptions of their work experience at Abington College.***
- ❖ Having various strategies including the Abington-specific Predoctoral Multicultural Fellowship program to increase the numbers of minorities recruited and retained in the ranks of full-time continuing faculty could be a best practice when its successful outcome is substantiated by the data. ***RESPONSE: The Predoctoral Multicultural Fellow Program has been tremendously successful at identifying excellent PhD candidates, engaging them in campus life, and serving as a test-ground for their potential and success as tenure-line faculty at the college.***

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ The Diversity Lecture Series is a good example of cooperation and strategic thinking. Faculty and staff working collaboratively to run a lecture series to address Pedagogy and Diversity and the diversity events being promoted in course syllabi is an excellent idea.
- ❖ The existence of the Intercultural Awareness Funds is praiseworthy, as is the suggestion to increase its visibility and therefore its utilization. ***RESPONSE: A growth in the use of the Intercultural Awareness Fund was achieved as indicated by increased requests for these funds. The Intercultural Awareness Fund will be described at the Fall Opening Meeting so new faculty are aware of this resource.***
- ❖ The Center for Intercultural Leadership and Communication (CILC), which serves the Campus community, local businesses, and non-profit organizations in promotion of multicultural awareness in the form of intercultural leadership and training programs could be a best practice when there is enough data to support the success of this practice.

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ Establishing the Abington Leadership Excellence (ABLE) programs shows a commitment to fostering a diverse pool of potential College leaders. ***RESPONSE: The first year of the ABLE program was very successful in recruiting future college leaders, exposing them of a range of administrative issues, and offering them training in a number of critical areas (ex: budgets, conflict resolution, etc.). All four of the participants were female and one was from an under-represented population.***
- ❖ Identifying that the College's management team is an area where the demographic profile should be more diverse is notable. Diversification should not be limited to gender and race/ethnicity.
- ❖ The suggestion that diversity training be part of New Faculty Orientation is a good one. ***RESPONSE: This session is being added to the fall orientation program by the academic division heads. Additionally, the Intercultural Affairs Director is adapting a special diversity training session for all new tenure-line faculty hires.***

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

- ❖ That Abington's strategic plan contains a goal to foster an inclusive College climate is positive. The examples of approaches various Abington units have taken to create a welcoming climate show thought, creativity, and commitment.
- ❖ It is commendable the College has made an effort to diversify its advisory board. ***RESPONSE: In addition to the Advisory Board, the college's Alumni Society Executive Board works to increase its diversity and some retiring members of this board have moved to the Advisory Board at the end of their term on the Alumni Society Executive Board.***