

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

Penn State Beaver has identified areas and potential activities to pursue as the Campus transitioned from being a component of the Commonwealth College *Framework* to creating a specific plan for Penn State Beaver. A new Campus Diversity Mission statement was an active and positive step toward this initiative. Beaver's focus regarding diversity continues to be more student-oriented rather than faculty- and staff-oriented. Increased attention to diversity beyond gender, race/ethnicity, and international status would broaden and strengthen Beaver's diversity efforts. Beaver is commended for the Campus commitment to replace the Equal Opportunity Planning Committee seed funding to support diversity events in the future.

RESPONSE: Campus diversity activities and plans have centered around the concept of cultural competencies, targeting the entire campus community. A key component of this approach is the offering of multiple cultural programs over the course of the academic year. These programs are attended by faculty and staff, as well as students. This past year programs have included a talk about the killing fields of Cambodia, Native American music and dance, LGBTA issues, Irish culture and music, and South American culture and music. Faculty and staff are asked to include attendance at these events as well as other activities that support diversity on their annual activity reports.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The new diversity mission statement is more inclusive of diverse populations and expands the target audience beyond students to apply to faculty and staff, and is commendable. The team also appreciates the proactive wording within the diversity definition that notes, "Beaver does not condone, accept, disregard, or ignore any actions that discriminate or separate individuals in a negative or disparaging way."
- ❖ The update specifically notes communication regarding diversity was identified as a concern in the mid-point feedback report. It is laudable that Beaver has identified new programming opportunities to remedy this concern.
- ❖ Beaver has put considerable effort into creating a diverse Campus Diversity Committee, which is noteworthy. The review team noticed, however, that lower-level staff and technical service representation may be lacking or missing altogether in the committee's make-up. Such inclusion may afford a more-rounded campus view.
- ❖ Potential best practices include the efforts to provide alternative coverage accommodations so staff can attend cultural competency events, as well as tying targeted diversity events to extra-credit opportunities in First-Year Seminars and other relevant and supportive courses.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The update was not clear regarding the information faculty, staff and technical service employees receive concerning appropriate processes when faced with acts of intolerance. ***RESPONSE: This is a point well taken. However, as a small campus we believe all employees know that their first course of action is to inform their supervisor of acts of intolerance as they would with other concerns. If the nature of those acts is significant they would be addressed by the campus environment team, which includes the Chancellor. Again, because of the size of the campus, employees should, and we believe would, be comfortable going straight to the appropriate Director or Chancellor if the act involved their immediate supervisor.***
- ❖ It is positive that Beaver makes good use of the Faculty/Staff Survey results as a prominent indicator of progress in regard to the overall diversity climate at the Campus.
- ❖ A potential best practice incorporates the addition of Housing and Food Services providing diversity menus that are linked to a campus program for the day.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ A potential best practice is in-school application sessions with the application fee waived.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Beaver has seen some success in diversifying its faculty, notably in hiring qualified women and international faculty, which has also yielded additional encouraging outcomes related to scholarship and teaching. While this initiative does represent progress, it is important to continue efforts to recruit faculty from diverse racial/ethnic groups within the U.S., as well as underrepresented/underserved groups such as persons with disabilities, veterans, members of the LGBT community, etc.
- ❖ Efforts to diversify staff have seen some success with two underrepresented hires at the exempt level. The difficulty in tracking recruiting efforts is noted. Continued attention to aggressive recruiting to diversify the candidate pools is warranted.
- ❖ The update made no mention of retention efforts for faculty or for staff. Retention strategies are recommended to capitalize on progress that has been made thus far. *RESPONSE: This observation is accurate in that the campus has not offered formal retention programs for faculty or staff from underrepresented groups. Again, given the small size of the campus, it is difficult to do so. However, it is worth noting that the campus has not lost a multicultural faculty member over the span of this plan. And while an African American staff member left the campus this past year, it was for a significant promotion. The campus believes that offering a work environment that is supportive of a diverse workforce is the best retention program when augmented by close mentoring by supervisors, which does occur. Also, given the campus' proximity to Pittsburgh and its ethnic communities, faculty and staff often take advantage of that support structure.*

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The number of United States/International Cultures courses offered is an affirmative reflection of diversity efforts, especially for a small campus. More information about the proportion of US to international courses would be helpful. *RESPONSE: For the Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 semesters Beaver offered 17 IL courses, 10 US courses, and 7 US/IL courses.*
- ❖ From the list of course titles provided, focus seems to be on international culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. Other aspects, including disability status and sexual orientation, do not seem as evident.
- ❖ Service learning is an important feature of the student learning experience and the connection between diversity efforts and Beaver Reach Out program is laudable.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The update notes gender balance within senior administrative leadership. Information on other leadership roles for the faculty, staff, and technical service employees in relation to diversity would be helpful. *RESPONSE: For the 2009/10 academic year, women chaired each of the three Faculty Congress committees, and held two of the four Congress officer's positions. Women also served as coordinators for three of the five baccalaureate degree programs on campus. The campus United Way committee was chaired by a female staff member. The Division of Undergraduate Studies Coordinator, Registrar, Assistant Director of Academic Affairs, Associate Director of Student Affairs, and Coordinator of the Academic Achievement Center are also women.*

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The limited information in this Challenge made it difficult to determine the effectiveness of the diversity component of the Staff Review and Development Plan process. In particular, the implementation of utilizing diversity as a unit-specific factor is laudable, but it is unclear if this practice will be instituted Campus-wide. *RESPONSE: Faculty are required to include diversity activities on their annual activity*

plan, and non-technical service staff must include information on their SRDP about participation in and support of diversity. All supervisors must address diversity in their comments. The Chancellor reviews all campus SRDP forms to confirm this is done.

- ❖ The Chancellor's attendance and participation at various events is valuable as it provides demonstrable support for overall diversity. Although other administrators are encouraged to follow the Chancellor's example, evidence of supporting diversity initiatives (attendance at events, participation in diversity programming) was not as apparent. ***RESPONSE: All directors were strongly encouraged by the Chancellor to attend the diversity programs and they complied. The Chancellor feels that the campus leadership must lead by example. An important point to note is that with the high quality of the programming provided attendees found the programs to be informative, entertaining, and thought provoking.***