

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

Penn State Behrend presents a well organized update with several laudable programs, initiatives and potential best practices in place. Particularly praiseworthy are the increased diversification of academic programs and curricula, and the engagement of faculty, staff and students in diversity initiatives. Diversity programs are student-focused. Areas in need of continuing attention are: 1) faculty and staff climate diversity issues, and 2) diversity of administration, faculty and staff. Improvements are noted in student recruitment, albeit, increased enrollment of underrepresented groups corresponds to overall enrollment increases the College has enjoyed over this reporting period; overall percentage of underrepresented student enrollments shows a slight increase. The use of benchmarks, measurable goals and related metrics would have benefitted the evaluation of programmatic success and progress, and strengthened the update. The commitment to data collection is evident; however most metrics were limited to descriptive data or comparisons between points of data collection, e.g., survey items.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ Information regarding diversity initiatives is distributed throughout the College to students and faculty during student and new faculty orientations and reinforced periodically with e-mail; however, diversity distribution to staff is unclear, with only one reference.
- ❖ The make-up of the diversity committee--Educational Equity and Campus Environment Committee (EECEC)--and its clearly stated charge is commendable. Membership of EECEC could be more inclusive by adding staff/student representation. Few references to programs, activities, approaches, and policy enhancements or how the committee communicates with student organizations are reported.
- ❖ EECEC is listed as a best practice, yet no metrics exist on the committee's effectiveness at fostering diversity initiatives. The review team suggests developing measurable outcomes and benchmarks.
- ❖ There is little mention of specific programming, activities, or services for diverse populations such as: students, faculty, and staff with disabilities; those who identify as LGBT; low income or first generation college students.

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

- ❖ The Office of Educational Equity and Diversity Programs laudably provides many opportunities for students--individually or in groups--to participate and engage in multicultural and diversity initiatives.
- ❖ Commendable are the well documented climate issues through the Institutional Research Committee's survey, the Faculty Affairs Committee's interviews, and various other methods reported.
- ❖ Survey findings for faculty in Metric B and faculty and staff in Metric C indicate a decline in positive responses over time. This suggests the need for corrective action.
- ❖ Of positive note is the significant increase in attendance at diversity events/programs.
- ❖ While much information has been collected, the least successful aspect of this Challenge is clearly indicated as: "Getting all administrative units to use and act on assessment data."

**Representation (Access and Success)**

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

- ❖ Behrend has made sustained efforts in recruiting and retaining a diverse student body through such programs as: Minority College Experience; Penn State Educational Partnership; Sleeping Bag Weekend; Women in Science and Engineering; Math Options; and increased scholarship funding.
- ❖ These praiseworthy efforts include some groups not typically included in diversity initiatives such as: those with disabilities; low income and economically disadvantaged; and adult learners.
- ❖ The increase in underrepresented student enrollments as the overall student population increased is noted and could be used as a benchmark percentage. Overall the percentage of minority students remains fairly consistent. Of interest is how the above programs impact these numbers.

- ❖ With the addition of the Nursing program, the number of women students has increased. The College reports achieving greater gender balance of the overall student population. Since Nursing is stereotypically a “female” profession, gains in overall gender equity do not alleviate the need for broader recruitment efforts to create gender equity within traditionally single gender dominated programs that have given rise to such initiatives as WISE. Also, are there recruitment efforts planned to recruit male students into the Nursing program?
- ❖ Potential Best Practice: The Enrollment Management Group has created various activities to increase the enrollment of underrepresented students.

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

- ❖ Statistics show an increase in hiring more diverse faculty members from 1997-2008. The highest increase is in female faculty from 23.6% (1997) to 34.4% (2008); however the statistics for staff members indicate that the majority has remained consistent at 88-96.5%. It is favorable that the College is putting in place measures to continue to address these issues.
- ❖ Successful programs/efforts used to recruit and retain a diverse student body could inform efforts to increase and retain a diverse workforce.
- ❖ More inclusive statistics would consist of faculty/staff with disabilities and other underrepresented groups.

#### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ Courses (US, IL, USI) that contain intercultural/international components show a 50% increase in participation. This is a praiseworthy example of an initiative with demonstrated success in a measurable outcome.
- ❖ Restructuring academic programs to allow students to take diversity-related courses is auspicious.
- ❖ Faculty diversity initiatives in research and scholarship are commendable and merit ongoing support.
- ❖ It is unfortunate that the Internationalization Task Force could not reach agreement. Nevertheless, the review team suggests searching for alternative solutions to mitigate and constitute a new charge.
- ❖ It is unclear if there are initiatives in addition to studying abroad and embedded study tour courses.
- ❖ Potential Best Practice: The increase of courses that foster intercultural and international knowledge.

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

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

- ❖ The administration appears to embrace diversity initiatives; yet there is no visible plan to increase diversification among leadership in management positions.
- ❖ Potential Best Practice: The adoption of the Administrative Fellows program.

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

- ❖ The College recognizes the importance of organizational change to enhance diversity and improve campus climate and appears committed to facilitating improvements in these areas.
- ❖ As mentioned in Challenge 4, Behrend could utilize its successful efforts in recruitment, retention, programming, and planning for students to inform organization change for diversifying faculty and staff, thereby re-tooling for variant audiences accordingly.
- ❖ Behrend should consider identifying concrete goals, measurable objectives, benchmarks, and metrics to appreciate progress. This would strengthen planning and updating considerably. (See Challenge 5, #1 for positive example presented in this update.) Also, the use of supplemental approaches, e.g., focus groups, interviews, etc., to discern underlying factors affecting progress may better inform practice and programs and help set realistic goals.