

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

Developed within an environment in which Penn State Greater Allegheny moved from a consortium of fourteen Commonwealth Campuses sharing a single diversity plan, to that of a more autonomous campus charged with developing its own plans, implementations and assessments, the final 2004-09 progress report is one of transition. The narrative reflects optimism and awareness that Greater Allegheny must move rapidly to establish a meaningful strategic plan to foster diversity. While it demonstrates a sensitive awareness to the challenges faced, there is little concrete evidence of initiative implementation or of the identification of indicators and metrics that have been or are ready to be employed. Throughout the update, the presentation of quantitative data is poor. Where tables should be illustrative, much effort is needed to ascertain their meaning.

Though the update is intended to be a final report of the Campus' progress toward the objectives outlined in its 2005-08 plan, the document lacks substantive reporting regarding actions taken to enhance diversity during the review period. Instead, much of the update focuses on actions that *will* be taken, and plans that *will* be made. Instead of providing specific information regarding progress and accomplishments, the update reads more like a to-do list. The report acknowledges that the campus did not establish a sound baseline for review, nor a "set of concrete outcomes and performance indicators." The review team looks forward to evidence of these accomplishments in the Campus' 2010-15 plan.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The statement that the campus has achieved a shared and inclusive understanding of diversity may be accurate; yet, lacking the specificity of either a qualitative or quantitative body of evidence to back up this perception, the question arises: how was this conclusion reached? Detail will be helpful.
- ❖ The initial Commonwealth College definition of diversity is quite general, as it references a multicultural and global society. Recognizing its unique—as well as its common—strengths and challenges, Greater Allegheny now has the opportunity to revisit its definition and to think inclusively about a broad coverage of groups and individuals distinguished by characteristics beyond gender and race.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Surveys are mentioned, but no disaggregated data are reported. For example, it is stated that "surveys show less than 1% of students cite issues with acceptance of race or sexual orientation." Without knowing the demographic breakdown of the students to which this statement refers, the data lack meaning.
- ❖ The update indicates that the Campus Committee on Diversity Enhancement, formed to serve as an "independent arm to monitor and report campus climate issues," will take on several initiatives. It is noteworthy that CCDE has been established, however, it is not yet clear what the group's mission is, how it will identify issues, or how it will measure progress. These three elements are fundamental to long term strategic planning and should be given serious attention.
- ❖ The progress report tends toward vagueness as it states that some strategies for developing inclusiveness "are complete" or "are being implemented," but provides neither detail nor specific measures to support these statements.
- ❖ There is no mention of faculty or staff as related to climate; this is a serious oversight.
- ❖ Instances of "cocooning" are reported to be decreasing. How has this phenomenon been assessed? What steps, if any, have been taken to address it?

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Several elements noted in this Challenge are potentially useful for diversity recruitment and retention. However there are no metrics presented to support that any of these efforts (like STEM) are effective for the campus. This is crucial to strategic planning.

- ❖ The initiatives listed in this section appear to be aimed primarily at underachieving and/or under-represented/underserved students. Are there also initiatives aimed at the student body as a whole to help all students understand the value of a diverse community?
- ❖ The explanation of the relatively low percentage of female students at Greater Allegheny by the domination of male-centric majors is confusing; Greater Allegheny provides instruction in the first two years of over 160 majors. The male-female split should not be major-dependent in the first and sophomore years. More proactive attention to the junior balance is warranted.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Recognizing that the small population at Greater Allegheny may preclude significant changes in raw numbers within the workforce, it is appropriate and appreciated that attention is being given to viewing hiring as an important element of nurturing and even expanding a diverse work community.
- ❖ Retention efforts for staff are not mentioned.
- ❖ Reliance on the original, narrow Commonwealth College definition of diversity will not yield success in the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. The campus is encouraged to develop its own, broad and inclusive definition of diversity, and to adhere to it in its recruitment and retention practices.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The responses to this Challenge are vague. How will producing additional reports help to enhance diversity? What types of reports are planned? What curricular elements is the Campus attempting to identify in these reports? How can reports be structured to foster changes that make a difference, or to support initiatives that are working? To create a useful strategic plan, goals and their implementation must be much more specific.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The report appropriately notes that specific goals and measures must be established. What is the projected timeline for establishment of these goals and measures? How will realistic goals be identified? Who will take part? How can the process be used as a teaching opportunity, as well as to make hires that diversify leadership and management?
- ❖ The review team acknowledges Greater Allegheny's low turnover rate and limited hiring opportunities, and strongly recommends that thought be given to identifying alternative ways of creating diversity within leadership and management.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Penn State Greater Allegheny is to be congratulated on establishing a Campus Committee on Diversity Enhancement. As nearly all of the tasks envisioned in the update appear to be set for future implementation, it is very important now to create specific timelines, goals, and means of assessment, as well as a process of accountability to resolve deficiencies noted.
- ❖ The Office of Educational Equity is available to assist the Campus in its diversity strategic planning efforts. The review team strongly urges that Penn State Greater Allegheny take intentional steps toward marked improvement in its strategic planning, implementation, and reporting.