

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

Penn State Hazleton's efforts to achieve its stated diversity objectives focus on the *Hazleton Experience* as a key strategic initiative to enhance diversity. This program, coupled with the highly visible and well utilized Diversity Affairs Committee, provides an effective foundation by which Hazleton's goal of "placing diversity at the center of our planning initiatives" may be achieved. Despite the prominence of the *Hazleton Experience* in the update, it forms such an important component of Hazleton's diversity initiatives that more details and data outcomes for the program would have been helpful. Indeed, the update could have been enhanced overall by more attention to detail and data, particularly outcomes data against concrete performance indicators. Nevertheless, the *Hazleton Experience* along with other diversity endeavors represent a substantial commitment to make a positive impact, which will become even more critical given the changing demographics of the region.

The update also would have been strengthened had the recommendations of the mid-term feedback report been more consistently followed, of which the most important one was to adopt a reporting format that answered the assessment questions contained in the 2004-09 *Framework*. Also, the update does not appear to have significantly addressed the Hazleton unit diversity strategic plan, although this point is perhaps less important since the Hazleton plan was an appendix of the former Commonwealth College plan and, accordingly, was not as developed as it otherwise might have been.

Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The update modifies Hazleton's definition of diversity since the mid-term progress report, but the new definition does not contain the last few sentences included in Hazleton's definition that was part of its response to the mid-term feedback report, which proffered some rich ideas surrounding diversity. Please clarify the current operational definition.
- ❖ The review team acknowledges that the identification of a multicultural coordinator remains a challenge but strongly recommends that this appointment remain a very high priority.
- ❖ It is critical for Hazleton to allocate adequate resources to develop a robust diversity Web presence.
- ❖ It is very positive that the Diversity Affairs Committee and the Multi Cultural Committee hold central roles within the Student Government Association and assist in advocacy, reporting and monitoring of the climate. More details about the composition of the committees and resources allocated to them along with outcomes that demonstrate a positive impact could affirm this structure as a best practice.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The examples of diversity activities and programming are positive and illustrate important initiatives designed to improve the climate. The update would be enhanced by including diversity strategic goals under this Challenge and reporting how activities met stated objectives.
- ❖ The addition of a bilingual counselor is recognized as an essential asset and resource for the campus community, recruitment initiatives, and students and their families. It might be useful to identify those factors (e.g., Campus culture, recruiting processes) that enabled this hire and try to replicate them to diversify other positions, including those positions that don't explicitly require "diversity skills."
- ❖ The longstanding Hispanic Migrant Education Program is an excellent example of community partnerships. In addition to service to the local community, the recruitment of nineteen students to various Penn State campuses establishes this initiative as a best practice. Tracking retention/graduation outcomes would add further credence to this judgment.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The list of interventions to augment recruitment and retention of diverse students showcases an intentional approach to planning and collaborations, which appear to have resulted in excellent outcomes.

Graduation outcomes are less robust, but the external outreach, campus programming and targeted hiring are all examples of a proactive course of action for this Challenge.

- ❖ The programming offered by residence hall staff is exemplary and helps to educate students about a range of diversity topics. Undoubtedly, these programs also assist in sustaining a welcoming climate.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The availability of numerous diversity-focused workshops, courses and professional development opportunities for employees are concrete examples of the Campus' commitment to increase the acquisition of "knowledge, training and tools." The utilization of measurements to assess the effectiveness of these offerings was not included and is strongly encouraged by the review team.
- ❖ The inclusion of faculty and staff demographics would have provided needed context by which to measure progress towards Hazleton's recruitment and retention goals. The Diversity Hiring Plan for Faculty Searches was referenced in Hazleton's response to the mid-term feedback report but was not identified as a continuing practice in the final update.
- ❖ The inclusion of a Diversity Affairs Committee member on all search committees is commended and with appropriate outcomes measures could become a best practice.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The 60% increase of courses with diversity content since the mid-term update is very positive. Given the changing demographics, adding some courses with explicit Latina/o content seems like an obvious way to apply strategic planning towards a needed goal.
- ❖ The update identified significant increases in international experiences and programming supported by the Campus. However, it did not mention expected outcomes or the process for evaluating the overall effort, and the review team strongly recommends that these practices become standardized.
- ❖ The programs and activities designed to specifically address Campus climate, academic success and emotional wellness are noteworthy. The Bridge to Academic Success appears to be a best practice in terms of retention outcomes compared to overall retention rates. The team could not identify the reported GPA improvement for program students in the update. Graduation outcomes will be the most telling. In some respects, reporting these initiatives under Challenge 3 might be more appropriate.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The many examples of the efforts by the Campus to develop leadership experiences for underrepresented/underserved faculty and staff are very positive, especially the Leadership Hazleton program.
- ❖ Outreach and community involvement by administration, faculty and staff are clearly important elements of Hazleton's presence in the region.
- ❖ The steady increases in key faculty and staff perceptions as reflected in the 2008 Faculty/Staff Survey are positive barometers of strategic diversity practices, especially the significant change from 3% to 50% for "acceptance of diversity in the workplace." Again, might not this point fit better under Challenge 2?

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The development and implementation of an annual action plan as a part of Hazleton's 2008-13 strategic plan with stated accountability, a timeline, and an assessment model based on key performance indicators is exemplary and should become the model for all strategic planning at Hazleton. Outcomes of this endeavor are eagerly anticipated.
- ❖ The review team acknowledges the collective efforts and successes achieved by Hazleton's leadership including the chancellor, administrative teams, and Diversity Affairs Committee. Combining this leadership and commitment to diversity with appropriate strategic planning processes, as exemplified in the aforementioned action plan, should produce outstanding achievement and the ability to report results in a manner that is both convincing and compelling.