

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

For its mid-term progress report, a member of the Penn State Wilkes-Barre community wrote a spirited memo addressing the state of affairs on the Campus' implementation of its 2004-09 diversity strategic plan. The memo detailed the existing campus climate and resulting challenges and then established a foundation for developing a revision of their original 2004 diversity strategic plan. The final update outlines accomplishments based on the revised plan, and the review team commends the Campus for following up on their stated planning intentions, though the team also noted that the update did not address the *Framework* assessment questions.

The major shortfall is that the revised plan and subsequent implementation, despite significant diversity actions, do not provide outcomes measurements against specific metrics that define success. Many components of the plan and subsequent update, such as plans to expand partnerships with high schools and community colleges, appear to have been "met," but the consistent absence of supporting outcomes data made it difficult to recognize the stated responses to most of the Challenges as accomplishments. Further, some of the descriptions were general and somewhat vague. The Campus needs to take the next step in planning by assessing the impact of its actions against *Framework* goals. For example, it is well and good that the expanded partnerships have resulted in more frequent visits and more stable relations with partnering schools, but how has this endeavor, along with the other actions listed under Challenge 3, contributed to better recruitment outcomes, especially against campus recruiting goals? Wilkes-Barre needs to employ robust strategic planning tools, such as benchmarks, baselines, and projected thresholds for success for desired outcomes and then measure progress against these thresholds. Finally, the update repeatedly notes that the development of a mission, vision and value statement is at the core of campus strategic actions; however, without a stated operational definition of diversity, which was recommended in the feedback provided at the mid-term, it is more difficult to build an inclusive campus environment.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ The Campus Environment Team (CET) continues to be an integral part of the campus diversity profile. Though the update notes that CET annually sponsors programming devoted to "racial, economic, age and religious diversity," the absence of detailed program descriptions, frequency, attendance, and other evaluative information made it more difficult to assess the range and profile of this important campus structure.
- ❖ The new Admissions Team with their focus on recruiting students from diverse racial/ethnic groups is an important new endeavor, and developing culture-specific brochures is an apt strategy. What additional substantive efforts and resulting outcomes has the Team achieved?

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

- ❖ Except for one location, the Campus is accessible to people with physical disabilities; it was unclear whether this achievement is part of campus diversity planning or overall University ADA compliance.
- ❖ The update reports that both the (2003) Campus Climate Survey and the (2004) Faculty/Staff Satisfaction Survey were implemented as appropriate by the CEO. However, no further information is presented on how any problems were identified from the survey findings or how these problems were addressed. The review team suggests that the update would be much improved by additional detail along these lines.
- ❖ The feedback report from the mid-term recommended implementation of a survey focused on exploring potential gender discrimination. Did any follow up occur on this recommendation?

**Representation (Access and Success)**

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

- ❖ Recruitment staffing has doubled, which has permitted increased visitation at targeted high schools, though as indicated in the opening paragraphs above, outcomes data, as called for in the revised diversity strategic plan, are still needed against concrete performance indicators. Strategic plans need to pose this

question throughout all Challenges, “Where are we at and where do we want to be?” Updates then follow up with data outcomes. The revised plan also proposed expanded partnerships with high schools and community colleges with significant populations of students from diverse racial/ethnic groups. Was this objective met?

- ❖ The addition of a full-time counselor is a notable step toward the campus goal of providing adequate support services for special populations, and Student Support Services has applied for a grant renewal. Does the Campus have an alternative plan to support special populations if the grant is not re-funded?
- ❖ The value of collaborating with the Philadelphia Recruitment Center can only be verified by tracking enrollment outcomes. Positive results will promote continuing and augmenting the relationship.

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

- ❖ The review team identified several points in the revised plan (e.g., supervisory training for the SRDP process, ensure search committees are briefed regarding recruitment practices, and other faculty and staff employment practices) that have potential, but the list of accomplishments in the update does not adequately address the results of these intended actions. Also, some goals need additional clarification.
- ❖ What is the relationship of diversity to the fixed-term faculty hires and promotions mentioned? One woman is identified, but the rest are not. Augmenting fixed-term hiring and promotion is not in the revised plan. The review team can only hope that this initiative is promoting diversity among the faculty.

#### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ If FYS syllabi end up being reviewed for diversity content as the update promises, it will be positive.
- ❖ The MOA’s that foster intercultural and international competencies for faculty and students (in Ghana and with several Indian universities) are commendable.
- ❖ The discussions exploring how to increase service-learning opportunities within the campus curriculum are important first steps in achieving progress for this Challenge.

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

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

- ❖ The Administrative Fellows Program and management development initiatives are cited as important leadership initiatives for diversity. No employee has yet developed “sufficient interest” in becoming a Fellow. Is the campus leadership aggressively promoting this program? The review team encourages proactive support for these and other creative initiatives to advance leadership development among diverse faculty and staff and for cultivating diversity skills among all employees, especially leaders.
- ❖ The Campus aspires to strengthen its search process so that screening mechanisms evaluate each candidate’s commitment to diversity. It was not completely clear to the review team whether this process had been fully implemented (having a person on the search committee with an “interest in diversity” is not a robust process). More important, this process will need full documentation to assure compliance.

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

- ❖ The revised plan and update make a commitment to implement and publicize general strategic planning goals related to diversity. The update notes that the Campus is regularly reminded of strategic planning goals and that the Strategic Plan Oversight Team annually makes a presentation to the Campus. These statements support the campus commitment to advance diversity goals, but the update lacks substantive detail on the content, frequency and outcomes of these efforts.
- ❖ The decision to partner with other Penn State campuses to share diversity programming and resources could become, with documented positive outcomes, a best practice. Listing the previous and planned activities of these collaborations, with records of participants and other relevant details, would have provided the review team with a more comprehensive understanding of the scope and success of these efforts. Indeed, such detail is often lacking throughout the update. It is not enough to simply identify what the Campus is “offering”: details on what actually happened is key to optimal reporting on progress.