

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
Penn State Altoona

Several very promising initiatives have been articulated along with timelines for completion. This approach will enable progress to be measured in an objective and comprehensive manner. The College proposes to further strengthen its efforts related to student recruitment and retention and climate issues. The College is encouraged to undertake more proactive efforts to increase the number of underrepresented faculty and staff, as also noted in the 1998-2003 feedback.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The proposed annual report and communication about diversity initiatives is a positive and proactive step that will facilitate more commitment and delivery of diversity initiatives.
- ❖ The marketing plan and Web site to be developed by the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity will provide a clear and concise avenue for promoting initiatives and efforts across the College.
- ❖ The employee-training program soon to be developed will enable new employees to understand how they can contribute to the College's diversity efforts.
- ❖ Providing all students, faculty, and staff a copy of the College's 2004-2009 diversity plan will enhance communication about all diversity initiatives and expectations.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The College plans to complete climate surveys every two years to chart progress toward the achievement of proposed initiatives. While this approach may facilitate the achievement of proposed initiatives, it is important to allow sufficient time for identifying and implementing appropriate initiatives.
RESPONSE: After reviewing the suggestions of the Review Team, the College has decided to conduct a climate survey every three years in order to allow sufficient time for implementing appropriate initiatives and to assess progress toward stated outcomes.
- ❖ It is commendable that the director of Institutional Equity and Diversity will cooperate with other College offices to better address the climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, and staff.
RESPONSE: The Director of Institutional Equity has recently submitted a five-year strategic growth plan for her Department. This plan includes several specific new initiatives to strengthen the College's climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, and staff.
- ❖ Several positive activities and programs are proposed for the MOSAIC committee to further diversity initiatives within the College.
- ❖ It is anticipated that the proposed Multicultural and Diversity Resource and Support Center will facilitate dissemination of information about diversity programs and initiatives. Several positive activities and programs are proposed for the MOSAIC committee to further diversity initiatives within the College.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Plans to increase on-campus housing and provide more opportunities to develop proactive diversity initiatives for students are positive.
RESPONSE: Plans for new on-campus housing are very positive and are moving ahead.
- ❖ Assessing the effectiveness of efforts of the College's retention committee will provide a systematic means to identify issues that impact enrollment.
- ❖ The entrance and exit surveys and the tracking system have the potential to yield critical information that can lead to more effective diversity programming.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ A training module for supervisors and search committees is being implemented to yield more diverse applicant pools. Additional attention to developing innovative recruitment approaches is necessary to improve the chronic low employment rates for underrepresented faculty and staff.
- ❖ A mentoring program is being established to assist with retention efforts.
RESPONSE: The Division of Student Affairs has implemented its new mentoring program in March 2004. The program assigns a mentor to all new hires within the department for one year.
- ❖ The plan to establish a Web site listing information for ongoing professional development opportunities that are available on campus, at University Park, and across the region is positive.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The College proposes a joint diversity enhancement fund to support new diversity initiatives.
- ❖ The proposed initiatives such as alternative spring break activities and the creation of the diversity/international house have the potential to enhance diversity education through out of class experiences. The College may consider additional out-of-class and service learning opportunities.
RESPONSE: The College is expanding its service activities within the Office of Student Life.
- ❖ The proposed College Award to recognize faculty members who have creatively and consistently contributed to the advancement of the College's diversity agenda is a positive and promising program.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The proposed administrative mentoring program aims to create a larger pool of underrepresented applicants for key positions.
- ❖ The initiative to increase diverse representation on promotion and tenure and related committees is positive.
- ❖ An annual report on progress toward diversity initiatives is proposed to lead to better understanding of progress toward the achievement of the initiatives and programs.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Assessing the effectiveness of MOSAIC and other diversity-oriented committees is a worthwhile avenue toward better achievement of diversity goals.
- ❖ The proposed plan to establish a diversity-training program for current and new members of the College Advisory Board's Committee on Student Affairs is positive.
- ❖ Working closer with community groups is commendable as an effort to advance climate issues facing the College.

RESPONSE: Penn State Altoona has enjoyed a strong and positive relationship with many diverse groups within the community. We have been an active partner with the local chapter of the NAACP and the Jewish Federation of Altoona. We are actively working with our African-American churches in the community to provide services and support to our students on campus. Pastors from these churches serve as members of our campus ministry staff. We actively support and host the annual African-American Heritage Festival each year. We are the site for community's African-American Read-In Program and Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebrations, and we financially support a number of these activities. For the last ten years the College has hosted and partially sponsored "Celebrate Diversity", a program directed toward middle school students in the area. Penn State Altoona values the strong relationships we have with diverse groups in our community. We will continue to expand and enhance our outreach activities and programs, thereby strengthening our campus and the Altoona community.