

**Feedback on Progress Implementing**  
**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09**  
**Penn State Altoona**  
**Mid-Term Progress Report**  
**Spring 2007**

Overall, Penn State Altoona is making good progress toward its goals. While the report does not use the structure of the assessment questions, it does provide the unit's answers, particularly in regard to measures, and is organized to clearly state the objectives under each Challenge and their current status. The report structure, especially the detailed Diversity Initiatives table which serves as a report card of progress, is a potential best practice. The College is encouraged to pay continued attention to "completed" items which may require sustained attention. Establishing measurable and achievable goals, timelines, and regular proactive assessment of progress is a strength; assessment efforts could be extended to many of the initiatives, such as those indicated under Challenges 2 and 4. More specificity of which groups are considered to be underrepresented within each Challenge would be helpful. Under its new leadership, the College is in a good position to complete many more of its diversity goals within the *Framework* cycle and to ensure that initiatives are institutionalized.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- ❖ Collaboration among the leadership of the College (Chancellor, DAA), OIED, and the MOSAIC committee has allowed the development of informational and training materials to promote diversity.
- ❖ The effectiveness of communication and education initiatives, especially extensive use of the Web, should be assessed. Over reliance on Web-based communication to the exclusion of other media and in-person venues may not reach segments of the community who have limited Web access or proficiency, or who learn best through other venues. Publication of the brochure also is necessary to be available to segments of the community not adequately served by the Web.  
*Response: The Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity will assess the effectiveness of its web-based communication and education initiatives. The Office also supplements web-based materials with paper flyers and posters, email, and closed-circuit TV announcements of activities and events.*
- ❖ It was unclear whether the revised item 1.8, diversity education program, is only Web based.  
*Response: The modules are being developed for use via the web, and for inclusion in First-Year Seminar courses.*
- ❖ Potential best practices include: creation of the OIED, particularly its charge and collaborative approach across the campus; creation of the Office of Planning and Assessment and emphasis on creating a culture of assessment of knowledge and understanding; establishment of a standing committee (MOSAIC) composed of faculty, staff, and students, which addresses issues of diversity.

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

- ❖ OIED advising and growth plans for multicultural and diverse student groups are positive. It was unclear which additional groups are most in need of this support. OIED service, support, and resources for LGBT students, faculty and staff are very positive and should also be extended to other groups.  
*Response: The Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity has already begun to identify groups which are in need of additional support, and these include the West Indian Student Association, Adult Student Organization, and Black Student Union.*
- ❖ The proposed climate survey to track progress and measure effectiveness in integrating diversity throughout all aspects of the College's operation is an appropriate initiative. The audience is not clear, i.e., faculty, staff, students or all three groups. More information on the shortcomings of the previous survey effort and how those have informed development of the upcoming survey would be helpful.  
*Response: The previous survey and report did not allow for further data analysis, especially disaggregating data to provide clearer information for targeted initiatives. The current survey will include faculty, staff, and students. By preparing and conducting the survey locally, additional analyses of the data can be conducted to assist the College in developing its diversity initiatives.*

- ❖ The proposed joint committee to proactively identify opportunities to collaborate and strengthen the in-class and out-of-class learning environments for students as related to diversity is a positive action.
- ❖ The MOSAIC committee initiatives related to explaining their role and providing information on recognizing and reporting intolerant acts, as well as the development of the “Chancellor’s Forum” for students to openly talk about issues related to diversity and campus climate are positive.
- ❖ Focusing on a few key Web sites for review of diversity information is positive; more information on which sites are identified and why would be helpful.

*Response: The Mosaic Committee will develop a list of websites to monitor in the coming year, and will conduct periodic reviews of these websites.*

### **Representation (Access and Success)**

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

- ❖ The College is commended for its successful recruitment efforts. More information on how its particular success was achieved would be helpful, including scholarships and other support for retention.  
*Response: Penn State Altoona’s Coordinator of Minority and Special Admissions coordinates participation in minority student recruiting activities with the Undergraduate Admissions Office staff, the Community Recruitment Centers, and the full-time recruiters in NY, NJ, and Washington, D.C. These activities include individual high school visits and college fairs. The Office of Admissions provides financial support for transportation and meals that enables minority students from these areas to visit Penn State Altoona at little or no cost to the student. The Coordinator of Minority and Special Admissions has begun to develop working relationships with a number of community service agencies in NY, NJ, and Washington, D.C. that encourage and support opportunities for minority students in higher education. In most cases, the agencies provide transportation and in-route meals, and in some cases overnight lodging.*
- ❖ Efforts on this Challenge, including internships, FastStart, scholarships and other financial support to recruit and retain a diverse student body, are positive. Efforts appear to target primarily racial/ethnic groups, they should be expanded to address other diverse groups and be more inclusive in the populations they serve. The First-Year Transition Program is a model of a more broadly inclusive target population.  
*Response: Internships, scholarships, and FastStart are open to all students. We will work on expanding outreach activities to address other groups beyond racial/ethnic minorities.*
- ❖ Attention to the causes of the steady decline of international students is warranted.  
*Response: The decline of international students is directly linked to overall decline of international students in United States and at University Park in the post-Sept. 11 world of tightened admissions, increased cost and time for application and visas, and increased competition from other countries for international students. The College also has to work within the limitations for international student recruitment that are set by university.*
- ❖ The Alaska Native Program is an intriguing recruiting initiative which has had a good initial yield. More information, particularly regarding resources and how it was established would be helpful.  
*Response: The Alaska Native Project was initially developed by the Assistant Dean, L.A. Wilson, who had lived in Alaska for a number of years. After discussions with staff from EOPC, the American Indian Leadership Program, and Penn State Altoona faculty and staff, the project set as goals to bring a cohort of 2-5 Alaska native students, annually, to Altoona for baccalaureate study that would allow the students to graduate with no debt, and to integrate examples, case studies, and projects from the Alaska experience into a wide variety of classes from economics to human development to engineering. An initial group of four faculty, the Assistant Dean, and the Director of Student Affairs went to Alaska to meet with key leaders in the native communities in May 2005. This trip was funded by EOPC and the Academic Affairs Office at Penn State Altoona. A second trip was taken in Fall 2005 to visit Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a boarding school for Alaska natives. This trip involved Academic Affairs and Admissions staff, and led to the recruitment of two students who came to Altoona in Fall 2006. The students participated in a PicTel conference with students at Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Fall 2006 to further assist with recruitment. The College charges the students in-state tuition rates, and the*

*bulk of their tuition and other costs are met through financial aid and support from the Alaska Native corporations.*

- ❖ The tracking system to monitor student progress is a very positive initiative.
- ❖ Potential best practices include the Alaska Native program and the Human Infrastructure Group.

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

- ❖ The College is encouraged to bring the same energy and creativity to addressing this area as it does to other areas to address the challenges of regional demographics and low turnover. Use of the module developed by the University's Affirmative Action Office to train supervisors and search committees on identifying and evaluating diverse applicant pools in faculty searches is a positive action. Efforts to attract diverse candidates and to expand its advertising, conference and networking efforts should be expanded.  
*Response: Recruiting diverse staff faces significant challenges, including regional demographics (since most searches for staff are conducted locally), limited national searches for most staff positions, limited funds for advertising and relocation for staff positions, and the university procedures that require positions be posted internally. Efforts to recruit diverse faculty face increasing competition for relatively limited numbers of diverse candidates, and diversity of candidate pools for faculty positions vary widely by field. We continue to use the module developed by the University's Affirmative Action Office to train supervisors and search committees on the importance of identifying and evaluating diverse applicant pools..*
- ❖ The mentoring program for new staff hires in the Student Affairs Division is positive.
- ❖ The training program for faculty and staff supervisors to create a more "family friendly" working environment is a positive initiative.
- ❖ Initiatives aimed at new hires (mentoring, informational materials, etc.) should be complemented by mechanisms to deliver similar initiatives to continuing employees.
- ❖ It is unclear how diversity-related activities factor into SRDP and Promotion and Tenure reviews.  
*Response: Supervisors are strongly encouraged to review staff participation in diversity-related activities in the SRDP process, and to identify areas for improvement and involvement. Promotion and Tenure reviews follow University and College guidelines. Most specifically, the candidates' "Record of contribution to the University's programs to enhance equal opportunity and cultural diversity" is presented in the Service section of the dossier. But diversity-related evidence might be considered in other ways as well, for example, as part of a record of teaching effectiveness or as a subject of a publication or artistic endeavor related to the faculty member's scholarly expertise.*

#### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ The number of general education diversity courses across several divisions is very positive. Notable improvements have been made in both the number of courses offered and student credit hours generated.
- ❖ Efforts to connect courses with out of class community-based learning experiences; the diversity modules to be included in the first year seminar; and the international components are also positive initiatives. The College is encouraged to be creative in tapping into the international expertise on campus to develop international experiences for students who cannot participate in the study abroad program.  
*Response: Penn State Altoona has worked to expand number of international courses delivered on campus, and recently brought a visiting Fulbright scholar to the campus. We are also working to overcome the obstacles to study abroad, including developing scholarships and unique short-term programs embedded in semester-long classes at the campus. These programs typically occur during fall and spring breaks or right after the spring semester, and last one or two weeks with no additional tuition costs. Recently, the Office of International Programs noted that Penn State Altoona had the second most embedded study abroad programs (5) university-wide, and was second only to the College of Agriculture.*
- ❖ Potential best practices include: creating a viable International Educational Task Force that has developed a study abroad program with remarkable success; creation of a partnership and exchange program with

the InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico at Bayamon; and leveraging resources such as those from the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence.

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- ❖ The College acknowledges its challenges in diversifying the leadership positions. A long-term systematic strategy to achieve this goal is needed.

***Response: The College will work to develop long-term strategies to address this issue.***

- ❖ The College's outstanding progress in increasing women in leadership positions is commendable.
- ❖ Seeking minority participation in the College's Advisory Board is a positive practice.
- ❖ Ensuring participation of members from underrepresented groups in all College committees is a valuable initiative; the College does note that care will be taken to not overburden the limited number of available individuals with such service.
- ❖ The College should develop the proposed annual report about the diversity improvement efforts of the College's executive, administrative and support staff (including successes and failures).

***Response: The College will develop an annual report summarizing the successes, failures, and challenges of our diversity activities and initiatives.***

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

- ❖ The five-year strategic growth plan for the OIED, addressing all the necessary resources, is positive.
- ❖ Incorporating Campus Religious Affairs into the OIED with a five-year strategic program for growing and integrating religious diversity within the College is positive.
- ❖ Completion and implementation of the assessment instrument will be valuable to determine the effectiveness of MOSAIC, Climate Issues Reporting Services, and the programs and services of OIED.
- ❖ The proposed Web-based diversity training for current and new Advisory Board members is positive.
- ❖ Working with community agencies such as NAACP and other diversity groups is a good practice.