

Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
Penn State Dickinson School of Law
Mid-Term Progress Report
Spring 2007

The update appears to focus efforts on racial/ethnic groups with little attention to other underrepresented/underserved groups such as the LGBT population and people with disabilities. The measures of success noted are illuminating but often do not pertain to the Challenge under which they appear. The appendices were remarkably informative but were not discussed or even referenced in the update. Some of the materials in the appendices predate the current assessment period yet provided valuable information; it would have been helpful to discuss and refresh these materials. Also, it appears that a diversity strategic plan has not been developed for the current planning cycle. DSL could show itself to better advantage through increased attention to the diversity strategic planning, assessment and reporting process.

Based on the materials in the appendices and outcomes of the 2004 review, DSL appears to have made great progress in diversity and academic strength within a short period of time. High marks also are given for Challenge 5, especially the integration of diversity into the curriculum. The review team was surprised that the update did not make more mention of the University Park expansion and the School of International Affairs; these changes present important opportunities for attaining diversity goals as DSL moves forward along with challenges that should be anticipated through this planning process. DSL should be diligent in ensuring that strategies for institutionalizing diversity initiatives are put in place as it moves to a two-campus structure, particularly in fully utilizing the new School of International Affairs as a mechanism for enhancing the intercultural and international competencies of DSL graduates. DSL best practices include aggressive, personalized recruitment of previously underrepresented students. Enhanced diversity in the student body will also require ongoing review of retention and BAR success, along with appropriate emphasis on actively ensuring a positive climate.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ Consistent with University policy, Transgender should be included in the description of diversity. It is not clear if the description given serves as DSL's formal definition of diversity. More information on how diversity information is communicated within the DSL community would be helpful.
- ❖ DSL is commended for inclusion of faculty, staff, and students on its diversity committee. More specifics on the composition would be helpful. For example, does it include staff members from all levels?
- ❖ Staff retreats that focus on the intersection of diversity with productivity, relationships and conflict are an excellent strategy; measurable outcomes should be documented.
- ❖ The "mechanisms" developed by the diversity committee should be more clearly described.
- ❖ The partnership with the Carlisle police and bar owners to improve community climate is an excellent example of comprehensive commitment to creating an inclusive environment.
- ❖ In the absence of a designated multicultural director, mechanisms to coordinate diversity efforts across the School should be developed and clearly described.
- ❖ Benchmarking success against the nation's top and most diverse law schools is useful; more data should be reported. Also, it is unclear how such benchmarking is a measure of success under this Challenge.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The Summer Law Scholars program is evidence of DSL leadership's support for diversity.
- ❖ Details demonstrating *how* DSL identifies and monitors climate should be reported, including how students and employees can interact with the Diversity Committee and Student Services.
- ❖ Prompt email response to insensitive behavior is good practice. Additional follow up, if any, would add to the strength of this approach.
- ❖ Measures of success and supporting data are excellent in regard to representation but do not necessarily indicate success in regard to climate.
- ❖ Potential Best Practice: The Summer Law Scholars program (also applicable under Challenge Three).

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Recruiting efforts are extensive and quite successful. Retention initiatives and data should be reported. DSL should emphasize the strategies and efforts that have resulted in its success.
- ❖ Mechanisms for collaboration are not clearly connected to diversity strategic planning.
- ❖ Enrollment figures are impressive and speak highly of DSL commitment to attracting a diverse student body. Data on persistence to graduation and BAR passage results should be assembled to demonstrate that recruiting efforts are having appropriate positive outcomes.
- ❖ Best practice: extensive personal contact.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Varied, expansive and appropriately strategic efforts to actively identify, recruit and appoint underrepresented faculty are provided and significant progress has been made. It is hoped that this progress will continue as DSL expands its faculty and staff with the development of the two campus structure.
- ❖ The partnership with the Office of Human Resources Hire Power initiative demonstrates positive effort to recruit and hire underrepresented staff.
- ❖ Information about how exit interviews are used to retain and promote the success of faculty/staff from underrepresented groups should be reported.
- ❖ Longitudinal numbers and retention data are necessary to document retention success.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ DSL's effort to integrate diversity and inclusivity into the traditional first-year curriculum is impressive.
- ❖ There has been a good expansion of elective courses to broaden the curriculum to include subjects that will enhance the diversity competencies DSL graduates entering the legal profession.
- ❖ The addition of the School of International Affairs puts DSL on the cutting edge of U.S. law schools in fostering international and intercultural competencies. Strategies for future development of curriculum are not discussed in depth.
- ❖ Potential best practice: the questions on the feedback form. It was unclear if forms are distributed in all courses. Data gathered and information about how these data are used should be reported when available.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Budgetary support for diversity demonstrates leadership commitment to diversity efforts. Concrete examples of additional active involvement should be reported.
- ❖ The review team notes that the response to question three is copied verbatim from Challenge Four and does not address leadership positions.
- ❖ It is not clear that the SRDP is an adequate device for identifying career aspirations of underrepresented staff.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Challenge Seven was not addressed. The brief response lacked substance.
- ❖ To ensure sustained organizational and systematic change – especially in light of the development of a two-campus Law School – DSL must set clear goals, expectations, objectives, and strategies for institutionalizing diversity initiatives as well as outcomes metrics by which to gauge progress.