

Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College
Mid-Term Progress Report
Spring 2007

Penn State Behrend's update addresses each *Framework* challenge in a well-organized and comprehensive manner. While the narrative generally provides sufficient detail regarding initiatives in support of the diversity strategic plan, the Review Team noted a general lack of data illustrating evidence of progress toward unit goals. ***RESPONSE: The College is aware that it does not have enough data to measure progress in all areas, and so it has developed a plan to measure key indicators. In a December 15, 2006 memo from Dr. Christiansen to the Office of Educational Equity, the College addressed the lack of current data available to measure progress:***

When the College created the new diversity plan in January 2005, it had limited access to metrics which could serve as performance indicators. Accordingly, the College decided to administer a campus climate survey and to measure student, faculty, and staff responses to diversity-related questions from national and local surveys. However, these surveys have been administered on the Behrend campus on only one or two occasions, and so it is difficult to assess our progress. The College is committed to administering these surveys in future years, thereby allowing us to measure our progress via longitudinal data analysis. For the purposes of this update, we have included the results of the initial surveys, against which we will benchmark ourselves in the coming years.

Accordingly, in the diversity update Behrend College established a timetable for gathering data. For example, Metric A under Challenge 1 indicates that the College began gathering NSSE data in 2002 and will continue to do so on a triennial basis (p. 4); Metric B indicates that the College began gathering HERI data in 2004-05 and will continue to do so on a triennial basis (p. 4); Metric C indicates that the College began gathering Senior Student survey data in 2004 and will continue doing so on a biennial basis (p.5). In all, the College has established 25 key metrics to measure progress toward meeting the challenges, and some of these metrics include multiple components (e.g., Metric C under Challenge 2 measures faculty responses to twelve separate issues (p. 9).

Behrend has integrated its definition of diversity into its strategic plan, and are accessible via the College's Web site for faculty, students and staff. Behrend is urged to revisit its definition of diversity, with more explicit attention to the contributions of underrepresented groups, e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical characteristics and capabilities, and religious beliefs. The update describes numerous recruiting strategies for increasing the diversity of enrolled students, including newly created scholarships. Areas where attention is needed include: development of a required curriculum that fosters intercultural and international competencies; creation of a welcoming climate within the College; development of systems of accountability; and provision of resources to enable the workforce to meet the College's diversity goals. In addition, Behrend is strongly urged to increase the diversification of its workforce. It is evident that the lack of diversification of the workforce is not a function of pipeline or the applicant pool. Data provided confirm that diverse candidates apply, but are not getting hired. More attention to this area is needed.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ Behrend's definition of diversity is lengthy, though inclusive. It has been shared with faculty, students and staff through brochures, orientations, meetings, e-mail and the Web. However, it downplays the importance of valuing individual differences.

RESPONSE: The definition argues for the value of diverse voices in a liberal education. We specifically note that individual from diverse backgrounds create a "unique intellectual environment" that allows individuals to share experiences and "examine new and unique ideas." The definition ends with the assertion "The breadth of opinions and experiences that the members of our academic community share results in a richer education for all."

- ❖ The Chancellor's Committee on Diversity has a well-defined role and is moving forward with the goals identified in the 2004-09 plan. The composition of the committee is top-heavy; expansion of the committee to include representation from faculty, students and staff at all levels is recommended.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Behrend is commended for its emphasis on diversity-related activity in annual staff performance evaluations as well as promotion and tenure reviews.
- ❖ A faculty, staff, and student climate survey is planned for administration in spring 2007 to measure attitudes toward diversity, familiarity with campus resources and knowledge of diversity issues. Behrend is encouraged to use the results of this survey to address areas for improvement.
- ❖ Behrend is commended on its multicultural programs, "Rhythms of Life" in particular.
- ❖ Metrics currently used to assess student awareness of diversity offices and participation in cultural events would be more meaningful if they provided demographic information such as race/ethnicity, gender, etc. This is also true for the measures used for faculty and staff.

RESPONSE: The 2004-05 HERI survey report does not provided racial/ethnic and gender breakdowns. The 2004 Faculty/Staff Survey report provided to Penn State Behrend does not include racial/ethnic breakdowns. The university does include gender breakdowns, from which it can be ascertained that male and female perspectives are relatively similar, with men having a more positive perception of two key issues and women having a more positive perception of the other two key issues.

- ❖ The Career Development Center's initiative to provide career counseling and workplace expectations training to underrepresented students is noteworthy. Corresponding details regarding the program's reach and impact would be helpful.
- ❖ The update included no mention of climate issues for persons with disabilities or for LGBT faculty, students, and staff.

RESPONSE: The report includes multiple references to steps taken to enhance the climate for persons with disabilities and the LGBT community. These include:

- ***Membership of Trigon representative (LGBT organization) and the Director of Educational Equity and Diversity on the Chancellor's Committee on Diversity (p. 3). These two individuals identify climate issues affecting member of the LGBT community and students with disabilities.***
- ***Creation of the Multicultural Resource Center to educate the College community on issues affecting individuals with disabilities and members of the LGBT community (p.7).***
- ***Trigon is a member of the Behrend's Multicultural Council. As such it has an active presence in the College's Office of Educational Equity and Diversity. Penn State Behrend supports a web site for the organization (<http://www.clubs.psu.edu/bd/trigon/www/>).***
- ***Recently the College created a part-time position to assist students with disabilities. In the summer of 2006 resources were provided to make this position full-time, with 50% of the responsibilities remaining in disability services and 50% as an advisor in the Division of Undergraduate Studies (p. 32). Accordingly, this individual develops relationships with students with disabilities starting when they arrive on campus for FTCAP.***
- ***The College has spent a significant amount of money in recent years in retrofitting walkways to make them ADA compliant (p. 32).***

Inclusion of climate assessment for these populations would strengthen reporting.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Initiatives described appeared to consist largely of recruitment activities. It is unclear if strategies exist to improve the retention and graduation rates for historically underrepresented students.

RESPONSE: The Enrollment Management Group (EMG) has been working with the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) to review retention data for the FA01, FA02, FA03, FA04, and FA05 cohorts, identifying students by their gender, ethnicity, age, etc. The College is in the process of identifying appropriate multivariate analyses to isolate the population groups most at risk for leaving

the College and the reasons for their departure. At the present time work has focused on first to third semester retention, but we are already working on fifth semester retention and on graduation rates.

- ❖ Behrend has experienced some increase in underrepresented student enrollment, but enrollment for women is declining. The College may wish to assess which of its numerous recruitment programs for women are most—and least—effective.
- ❖ Behrend is commended for receipt of a trustee scholarship to support students from underrepresented groups. Similarly, the NSF grant to support women students and students from underrepresented groups in STEM fields of study is noteworthy.
- ❖ The Review Team noted that the addition of programs that historically attract female faculty and female students—such as nursing and education—does not diversify the overall composition of existing programs; rather, it creates additional areas lacking in diversity (such as males in nursing).
RESPONSE: Very few, if any, academic programs attract a perfectly balanced number of men and women, white and non-white students, adult and traditional students, etc. By adding programs in Nursing and Education we hope to attract academically qualified students from all areas, regardless of their gender and ethnic background. We acknowledge that Nursing especially tends to attract more women than men, but we still intend to add the program to meet a regional need for more health care professionals. The College is enrolling its first cohort, which has a percentage of males (17.4%) that is three times the national average of male nurses (5.8% -- cited in the 2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, published by the U.S. Department of Health). Incidentally, 52.2% of the first cohort is adult students by age (24 years or more).
- ❖ Potential best practice: the spring 2006 Women to Women Mentoring Program for female students in “offer” status.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ From the information obtained from the Affirmative Action Cards, it is clear that underrepresented individuals are applying for positions. In fact, of the 676 cards received, 310 were applicants from underrepresented groups. Of the 13 faculty members hired, however, only 1 was a member of an underrepresented group. Behrend is urged to revisit its strategies to increase the likelihood of success in this area.
- ❖ Data provided indicate that there are no women or members of racial/ethnic minorities in the higher paying staff and technical service positions. As noted for faculty hires, the College is encouraged to closely examine its staff recruitment and hiring practices.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ Few instructors are utilizing diversity modules developed for the First-Year Seminars. An indication from the CAO of the campus as to how this concern is being addressed would be helpful.
RESPONSE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN: It takes time for faculty members to incorporate new learning objects into their class, especially when they are presented in a technologically sophisticated format. The difficulty Penn State Behrend has with its faculty embracing the diversity module is similar to university-wide faculty hesitance to utilize the iStudy for Success! modules. In August 2007 I will talk with all the First-Year Seminar instructors about the diversity module and its benefits. In order to familiarize faculty members with the technical side of the module, I will arrange for the Learning and Resource Center to provide instructional workshops.
- ❖ Responses to measures on conducting research and teaching international/global issues, racial/ethnic minority issues, and women’s/gender issues reflect a low percentage of faculty participation in these areas. It may be useful to provide additional data on participating faculty such as by rank and subject area.

- ❖ It was noted that the most successful initiatives are those in which individual faculty members work to incorporate diversity into their courses. The infusion of diversity into the curriculum and into research does not appear to be a priority for Behrend's faculty overall. The College is advised to use the data provided (with particular attention to metric C) to develop initiatives which address this area of concern. *RESPONSE: We do not understand how the review committee reached the conclusion that "the infusion of diversity into the curriculum and into research does not appear to be a priority for Behrend's faculty overall." In the update we provided only a sampling of the diversity initiatives being pursued by the faculty -- the update is 34 pages in length without appendices, so we excluded multiple examples of the diversity-related activities occurring at Penn State Behrend. All four schools in the College put a high priority on diversity and incorporate diversity into their curriculum, either in a formal way (e.g., restructuring the Psychology degree to include a "diversity" core area) or in an informal way (e.g., selecting diversity topics for classroom reading assignments or discussion topics). Data from the 2004-05 HERI survey indicated that 70.5% of the College faculty agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that "[f]aculty should try to include diversity-related content in appropriate classes." In the 2007-08 HERI survey we anticipate that a higher percentage of Behrend faculty members will indicate that they research intercultural topics and incorporate diversity-related issues in the classroom.*

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The Review Team expressed concern that the executive and administrative level positions are filled exclusively with white males. It is recommended that greater attention be devoted to diversifying the current demographic composition of leadership and management.
- ❖ The plan indicates no formal mechanism for providing training to members of underrepresented groups who wish to assume leadership positions. The Review Team recommends exploration of best practices at other colleges and/or campus locations to address this lack. Development of a plan to train a diverse management team is advised.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ It is positive that schools are encouraged to develop diversity-related clubs for program areas, but it is evident that the initiative lacks faculty support. The Review Team recommends that the faculty be encouraged to establish relationships with diversity-related clubs with which they may have some interest.
- ❖ As stated in Challenge 1, the Review Team suggests that Behrend include faculty, student and staff representation at all levels on the Chancellor's Committee.
- ❖ Behrend is commended on its partnership with Erie region schools and its collaboration with nine western Pennsylvania schools to create the Students and Employers Enhancing Diversity event.