

Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus
Mid-Term Progress Report
Spring 2007

Penn State Fayette has made diversity a priority in its strategic plan and has made notable progress towards its diversity goals, such as creating a Cultural Center, developing an active diversity taskforce and diversity brochure, placing diversity content on its Web site, linking cultural events to courses, and participating in the LGBT Support Network and Zero Tolerance for Hate Network. Fayette has had limited success in recruiting and retaining students, staff and faculty from diverse groups, and in diversifying its curriculum. According to Educational Equity data, the faculty is 96%, undergraduate students are 92%; and staff are 91% white. Fayette is encouraged to follow up on incomplete initiatives noted in the Update Matrix and to develop strategies to address unsuccessful efforts. Implementing assessment plans and reporting on data that measure the success of diversity efforts are necessary. The review team notes that a new Chancellor is now in place who himself brings diversity to the highest administrative position; it is hoped that he will set the tone for positive changes and new initiatives.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ Beyond the mission of the Diversity Task Force (DTF), a definition of diversity is not stated.
RESPONSE: Our mission statement does identify how we define diversity, and how we represent ourselves on our University campus. We as a taskforce need to review and define diversity for our campus.
- ❖ It is unclear if the diversity brochure distributed to all incoming transfer students and full-time degree students is also provided to part-time or non-degree students.
RESPONSE: This year the brochure will be distributed to all students at orientation. In addition, the brochure is displayed around campus and will be added to the website.
- ❖ It is positive that the diversity Web site can be accessed directly from Fayette's home page and includes a Campus Diversity Survey detailing positive outcomes as well as challenges.
- ❖ DTF co-chairs share responsibility for the taskforce efforts. More information about their responsibilities and support for their service (e.g., release time) should be reported. Benchmarking with other campuses regarding the function and scope of responsibilities of multicultural coordinator positions may be helpful.
RESPONSE: The DTF co-chairs set up and run the DTF Meetings. They take all ideas for programming and match those ideas to academic classes and any issues that need to be examine. We apply for grant money and take care of the budget for the DTF. We plan events in accordance with the academic-diversity event. We promote the concept of diversity through posters, brochures, and news coverage. We enhance educational and awareness opportunities via course availability and content, library resources, and exhibits. We also assess the campus diversity climate. We have always gotten support from upper management and release time has never been an issue. Benchmarking with other campuses is currently done through C.A.S.T. (Campus Activities Steering Team). This is a committee comprised of the activities staff from all 20 campuses. Best practices and ideas are shared through this group.
- ❖ Potential best practice: including a community member on the DTF.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Since opening the Cultural Center (March 2005) with a diversity-related library resource database, cultural programming and receptions have had increased participation and garnered local news coverage.
- ❖ It is commendable that training on African American culture, sexual harassment, and LGBT issues are available for faculty and staff. Data on participation and assessed outcomes should be reported.

- ❖ Climate issues can be reported via the 20 members of the DTF as well as via an on-line survey. Details of frequency, type and resolution of identified issues should be provided. Plans to revive the Multicultural Student Association and to utilize this group as a mechanism to monitor climate should be pursued.
RESPONSE: We have not kept data in the past on any incidents. All incidents were handled on a case-by-case basis. We plan to implement a process to collect more data. Examples of the hostility ranges from inappropriate language to racial or GLBT jokes. Students, faculty and staff find this offensive and have trouble dealing with how to stop this behavior. They do report that they feel safer in talking in these informal groups.
- ❖ Details about diverse student organizations should be reported, including participation rates and activities.
RESPONSE: We will start collecting this information to prepare for the 2009 report.
- ❖ Additional data, implementation of assessment strategies, and metrics for gauging progress under this Challenge are recommended. The climate survey conducted 5 years ago could provide baseline data.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ It should be clarified how the Annual MLK Celebration serves as a recruiting and retention initiative.
RESPONSE: The MLK celebration serves as a recruitment method with a local high school recognition ceremony and attendance by Head Start of Fayette County, Young Inspirations, and the community at large. In addition, it serves as retention by enhancing the out-of-the-classroom experience.
- ❖ Fayette's success in recruiting and retaining student-athletes from underrepresented groups is commendable. Efforts should be extended to avoid reliance solely on the student-athlete profile.
- ❖ At present 6% of students are African American and less than 1% are Asian American or Hispanic American. Focus groups or consulting with relevant community groups might aid recruiting efforts.
- ❖ Retention data are given only for student-athletes; detailed data regarding retention rates and intergroup disparities would yield relevant information to assess retention efforts.
RESPONSE: Retention has been given more focused attention recently. In the near future there will be a more concerted effort to collect this data and make necessary adjustments to improve the retention of historically under-represented groups of students.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ It is positive that search committees include a member of the DTF and are charged to consider diverse perspectives on research, scholarship, and experience. A similar approach is recommended for the recruitment of staff.
RESPONSE: We have implemented this requirement when hiring staff.
- ❖ Fayette is encouraged to creatively address the challenge of negative regional image to national searches.
- ❖ The review team notes an overall concern regarding representation of gender and race/ethnicity distribution across groups. Data should be examined to identify trends regarding recruiting and retention.
- ❖ It is positive that staff positions are publicized in local and regional papers; Fayette is encouraged to follow through on its planned initiative to send staff advertisements directly to various relevant community organizations, as noted in its 2004 *Framework* plan.
- ❖ To better evaluate recruitment and retention patterns among faculty, staff and technical service workers, it would be helpful to report longitudinal data by gender and by race/ethnicity.
- ❖ The peer mentoring program for adjunct faculty is positive and could be expanded to new full-time faculty. Information about the profile of adjunct faculty and whether this group can be a means for diversifying the overall faculty would be helpful.
RESPONSE: The peer-mentoring program for adjunct faculty was developed using the mentoring program that is offered for new full time faculty. The additional profile information you have requested will be collected for the next report.

- ❖ Fayette notes the success of informal networks that create a sense of community “to counteract cultural hostility created by students and other faculty who are not receptive to diversity.” More information about these networks, including data to support their efficacy, is needed. Also, details about the nature of this hostility and campus efforts to address it should be reported under Challenge 2.
RESPONSE: Our informal networks exist because our campus is predominantly white, and we find that these small groups help strengthen the feeling of safety among our diverse faculty staff and students. Within this network, we direct faculty, staff and students to outside agencies that help with gender identity as an example.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ Diversity enhanced courses in the general education curriculum, Honors program, and electives offered by several faculty members, are a positive step. More information about how many courses include diversity and to what extent, and how the range of diversity is defined and covered within courses would be helpful. Further progress could be made with an overall plan for proactively and purposefully infusing a broad range of diversity elements into the curriculum. Conducting the faculty review of the curriculum, as noted in the Update Matrix, would move Fayette toward this goal, as could oversight by a curriculum committee, the DTF, or the proposed endowed chair.
RESPONSE: We have initiated research on campus looking at curriculum, syllabi, and assigned activities to see how they incorporate diversity in our current classes. We plan to use the collected data to determine how we can create a more diverse curriculum. Also, we plan on using this data to determine what training we may need to provide to our faculty who are changing their curriculum to be more diverse and accepting.
- ❖ Some diversity DTF events are now linked to classes, which have been successful in significantly increasing the number of students attending these events. Further assessment of this linkage could include data on how many and which classes are involved and in what manner the events are integrated.
RESPONSE: During fall term, we will be linking our planned events to 3 classes, we will plan on gathering more data from the classes to be used for the 2009 report.
- ❖ Fayette is encouraged to benchmark with other Penn State campuses concerning first-year seminar diversity initiatives that enhance intercultural/international competencies.
- ❖ Under Challenge 4, Fayette notes faculty networks that provide a sense of community in response to faculty and students who are hostile to diversity. Such networks could be developed into collaborations to more formally address climate issues through the FYS and other curricular/co-curricular avenues.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ It is positive that administrative search committees “are asked to ascertain the applicant’s sensitivity level to diversity issues.” Committees may also find it helpful to inquire about candidates’ previous experience with diversity initiatives and issues.
- ❖ Formal mechanisms to identify diverse prospective leaders and provide them with professional development are recommended. Developing a diverse pool of potential internal candidates is critical to optimizing progress on this Challenge.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ It is positive that diversity appears as a major goal in the Fayette strategic plan and is also mentioned in goals relating to curricular enhancement, hiring and student activities.

- ❖ Efforts to secure resources, soft budgetary support and authority to request funds from other sources demonstrate support for diversity. Also, a budget line designated for cultural programming is in the 2007-08 budget and funding for the Cultural Center is a goal in the upcoming Capital Campaign. Recruiting more diverse members to participate on the Advisory Board is a potential best practice. More information about the Advisory Board, including its responsibilities, goals, and demographic profile would provide a baseline for measuring success for this initiative.

RESPONSE: The Advisory Board of Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus is comprised of 36 members: 8 females, 28 males (one of whom is Black), 3 ex-officio members and 3 directors emeritus. The Board's responsibilities / purpose are as follows:

- ◆ *advise the Trustees and Officers of The Pennsylvania State University and the administrative officers of Penn State Fayette concerning policies that should be adopted by the University and/or Penn State Fayette to serve and benefit the geographic area in which Penn State Fayette is located;*
- ◆ *act as an advocate for Penn State Fayette and the University in the local community;*
- ◆ *advise and assist the Chancellor in all matters related to the raising and disbursing of funds for the improvement of the academic program, physical plant, equipment and services of Penn State Fayette;*
- ◆ *advise and assist the Chancellor in all matters related to the acquisition and solicitation of charitable gifts, equipment, supplies and property to be used by Penn State Fayette, in the service of its students and the community;*
- ◆ *support and advance the educational mission of Penn State Fayette and the University.*