

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

As a campus that was once part of the Commonwealth College, Penn State Greater Allegheny did not submit its own stand-alone diversity strategic plan for 2004-09, and the mid-term progress report is the Campus' first update on how well it is implementing *Framework* Challenges apart from its activities as a member of the Commonwealth College. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the update is more of a general description of the current status of diversity than a detailed report optimizing strategic planning procedures (i.e., thoroughgoing use of benchmarks and concrete performance indicators with data outcomes measured against these indicators). It is difficult, with a few exceptions as noted below, to determine the extent of increases and improvements since the beginning of the current diversity strategic planning cycle. Nevertheless, the update is clearly written, providing useful cross references. It notes both strengths and weaknesses, which should help the Campus prioritize efforts for improvement. Several practices warrant close attention for their innovation and potential impact, including the Teaching International initiative, the commitment to providing low-income and other diverse students with personalized help in applying for admissions and financial aid, its successful outreach for recruitment, and commitment to collaborating with community agencies. As the Campus moves forward in diversity strategic planning, the review team encourages a thoroughgoing approach with strategic goals that reflect the Campus' major priorities, metrics that define success, and consistent outcomes measurement (the approach used for ACE could be a useful model for other diversity endeavors). A good first step might be to expand the appendix of the Commonwealth College's diversity strategic plan that specifically applied to the Campus or the diversity components of the current strategic plan. Finally, the update appears to be thin on LGBT and disability issues.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The definition of diversity is thoughtfully tailored to the Campus and University community.
- ❖ The role of the diversity committee is filled by the Campus Directors' Cabinet, composed of the chancellor and directors and chaired by the director of Academic Affairs. This structure promotes the buy-in of leaders, however, the Campus should encourage broader participation, including students, faculty, and staff (perhaps through the proposed Campus Office for Diversity Enhancement). Such a mix might generate new ideas for improving the climate. It might also address the weakness noted in the update in "educating the broader campus community on the role of diversity."

RESPONSE: We will implement a broader campus based Diversity entity which will include membership beyond the Directors of the CDC. Not having the resources to hire a campus officer for Diversity we will move to having a "Campus Committee on Diversity Enhancement." This group will be broad and measured in its scope in setting goals and evaluating results.

- ❖ Potential best practice: To maximize resources, the Campus has integrated academic and student life events on common diversity themes (e.g., the Teaching India program with India-themed cultural events), though data are needed to determine the actual effect of this collaboration.

RESPONSE: Such data as requested will be collected particularly through measuring the participation of students from a variety of courses in the scheduled teaching venues in the Teaching International program.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Survey results show less than 1% of students cite issues with racism or acceptance of sexual orientation – indicators of a positive climate.
- ❖ The report lists a number of means for monitoring the climate. However, more details are welcome on several processes, such as those used to evaluate publications for inclusiveness and support, monitor incidents of discrimination, respond to climate surveys and potential incidents of discrimination, promote a student-centered focus, and analyze roommate assignments and intramural team memberships. Data on the outcomes of processes would be helpful.

RESPONSE: The Campus Committee on Diversity Enhancement (CCDE) will develop and implement the mechanisms to monitor and evaluate inclusiveness, monitor incidents of reported, observed or perceived discrimination based on the qualifiers of sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and nation/international origin and/or status. The CCDE will also be tasked to review campus climate surveys and be proactive in the assignment of roommates, preferring the random assignment thereof. CCDE will also work with the athletic unit to support and continue the use of “draft” and other mechanisms to integrate intramural team membership. CCDE will devise tables to illustrate data under faculty and administrative leadership.

- ❖ More background information is needed to understand the dynamics involved in the apparent problem with same-race intramural teams.

RESPONSE: It is the observation of campus leadership that left to the “cocooning” effects to ordinary campus life intramural teams and social networks will overwhelmingly reflect the “comfort zone” syndrome with permits all male, race partitioned teams; when the campus initiated a “campus wide” draft based on interest and performance we achieve co-ed, multicultural and multiracial teams, such remain the ideal. Current campus Athletic leadership is committed to these methods and partnering with the CCDE to maintain the ideal and make it the standard of participation across the campus.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Enrollment data show some increases within various ranges, such as between 16.6% and 20.1% for students of color and 10.9% and 16.3% for adult learners. The Campus notes an under-enrollment of women students but does not discuss solutions. Data on other diverse populations would be appreciated.

RESPONSE: Please look for future reports from the newly formed CCDE for these data and for the proactive solutions to attract underrepresented populations of every stripe.

Analysis of data from offer accepted versus offer declined students indicates that the overrepresentation of male students is most likely due to the overrepresentation of males in the most common majors on campus (ENGR, IST, BUS) combined with a lower than average adult population.

Specifics on what other diverse populations are to be discussed would be appreciated.

- ❖ Numerous recruitment and retention mechanisms, like ACE, EOP, and the Learning Center are noted in the update. These structures undoubtedly provide excellent support for students, though it would be useful for the Campus to assess the respective impact of these endeavors. ACE is rigorously assessed, though it would be instructive to know how students with similar characteristics who don’t participate in the program do in comparison to ACE students

RESPONSE: These data will be made available through the CCDE under the leadership of ACE to other units involved in the CCDE activities. Previous comparisons of students with characteristics similar to those of ACE students to those in ACE generally show that the ACE students perform better,

- ❖ There is a commendable diversity in the advising staff.

RESPONSE: PSUGA thanks the Equity office for this observation.

- ❖ Potential best practice: The campus has determined that retention could be enhanced by providing applicants, including multicultural students, with more personalized assistance in applying for admission and for financial aid. The response has been to create a position for an Ombudsman in Admissions/ Financial Aid and a cross-function enrollment management support team. Again, measuring data outcomes would substantiate the effectiveness of this initiative.

RESPONSE: We hope to also add an Academic Ombudsperson to increase the cross functional support and personalized assistance for student who need and require such; moreover, these notions support the vision of the campus to be “...always available for the success of our students and communities.” These efforts operate from the recognition that many students from Southwestern Pa., from city schools, from first time university families, and from international locations will benefit from a “case management” model for success. We would greatly appreciate financial support from central

University funds to better equip these functions with data capacities and more support capacity in general.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Retention of faculty and staff is reported to not be a problem, though no data are provided to support this assertion. If data do support this point, a better approach might be to identify factors that optimize retention and report on how the Campus takes advantage of the experience of its faculty and staff to move diversity endeavors forward.

RESPONSE: Data here were not cited because the numbers are so small. Specifically, with one exception, all nonwhite faculty and staff who left in the time period in question left because they received better jobs or because family necessitated relocating. The one exception was a faculty member who did not get tenure.

Indeed the campus does take advantage of its significant resources of diverse faculty and staff, to include one full professor who has served in administrative posts directly responsible for diversity and the Chancellor who has been a senior official in a national organization committed to equity.

- ❖ Many initiatives under this Challenge appear to be very commendable, such as writing job descriptions to appeal to a diverse population, developing positions that appeal to “minority and underrepresented interests,” selecting “key staff” to attend Hire Power seminars, faculty mentoring, and supporting professional development and promotion on the tenure track for faculty and staff from diverse racial/ethnic groups. More details, such as the criteria for selecting “key staff” for Hire Power and data outcomes for as many programs as possible, would be welcome.

RESPONSE: Minority and female faculty receive both disciplinary mentoring and also are encouraged to work with the Senior Faculty Mentor, Dr. James Stewart. Dr. Stewart’s office has provided funding and other support to numerous faculty members.

We will indeed continue to take advantage of university devices like Hire Power and also the quality seminars which altogether generate fertile grounds for growing key staff in these vital areas.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ General markers of progress illustrate diversity in the curriculum, e.g., lists of courses and specific areas of research with diversity-related themes. However, more measurement is possible; for example, the increase over last year’s offerings in diversity-themed classes and the dollar amounts of internal and external grants for support of service-learning initiatives.

RESPONSE: It appears the CCDE would benefit from producing an annualized data format that contains these and other issues where more measurement and data formulation would enhance our diversity efforts. This will happen.

- ❖ The campus accurately acknowledges the relative paucity of gender-related classes.

RESPONSE: CAO will review and determined direction for additional gender related classes.

- ❖ Potential best practices: Teaching International, the short-term international trips with faculty in conjunction with courses, and service-learning initiatives. More details would be useful (e.g., how is service learning systematically promoted, recognized, and supported), and data are needed to demonstrate positive outcomes (e.g., assessment of international competencies among students who participate in short-term trips).

RESPONSE: Agreed. Faculty will be advised to developed testing and reflective devices to determine value(s) and assessment of short term international trips and service learning experiences.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The review team acknowledges the constraints the Campus faces, such as few openings and low turnover. Still, this section of the update could be strengthened by providing more details on endeavors that are currently in place, such as mentoring and leadership development, or better still, by articulating a coordinated plan with tangible goals and measures.

RESPONSE: Directors of campus units are encouraged to expand their networks of experience and possible recruitment sources. Additionally, the CCDE will take up the issues of goals and measures in these areas. Recent hires on the campus have placed minority individuals in positions of impact and influence. With some expectation of turnover due to attrition such individuals will climb the career ladder available in the University and at this Campus.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organization Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Faculty evaluations for tenure include specific requirements for commitment to diversity; faculties are nominated for University awards, with stated results.

RESPONSE: CAO administrative efforts and faculty excellence combined with that of the CCDE will produce tangible change.

- ❖ Potential best practices: structured partnerships with University and community groups, including PEPP; Continuing Education grant programs; the Educational Opportunity Center (which is apparently confused with the Educational Opportunity Program in Appendix E); and social service agencies.

Additional best practices will include the summer programming for first generation and minority students in the areas of math and science and other campus “pipeline” programs which will generate future success and future leadership.