

**Diversity Strategic Plan 2004-2009
Mid-Point Update
Penn State Lehigh Valley**

The 2004 – 2009 Diversity Strategic Plan was written for the Penn State Berks–Lehigh Valley College. Stemming from a University-wide reorganization, the Lehigh Valley campus split from the Berks–Lehigh Valley College and became part of the newly formed University College on July 1, 2005. Due to the fact that Penn State Berks was the larger partner of the former college, many of the original goals were written from a Berks perspective. With the split, Berks became a college on its own and many of the diversity strategic plans and goals went along with it. As a stand-alone campus, Penn State Lehigh Valley has neither the student body, nor the resources to achieve many of the goals in the original Berks–Lehigh Valley College plan.

Penn State Lehigh Valley has faced many challenges and opportunities with the new University realignment, not the least of which was to establish our own Diversity Committee and create a Lehigh Valley Diversity Strategic Plan. We are proud of what our campus has achieved and what our campus represents to the community in the Lehigh Valley service area. We have moved forward and have formed a Diversity Committee and created a diversity statement. As a campus, our departmental strategic plans are due in the 2007 – 2008 academic year. It was determined by our Campus Administrators that committee strategic plans would follow – incorporating both the goals of the University’s Diversity Strategic Plan and those that will be outlined in the new Penn State Lehigh Valley Strategic Plan. We acknowledge that, as a campus, we have a long way to go in creating and then implementing a Penn State Lehigh Valley Diversity Strategic Plan and are working toward creating a comprehensive plan in alignment with the diversity issues facing our institution.

CHALLENGE 1: DEVELOPING A SHARED AND INCLUSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSITY

The mission of the Penn State Lehigh Valley Diversity Committee is to foster tolerance and promote the diversity of the campus.

The committee is dedicated to creating a more inclusive community in all realms of service, focusing on the appreciation and respect for individual and cultural differences. Through involvement, outreach, and educational events, the committee welcomes, encourages and supports diverse programming. Some examples of how this is demonstrated includes:

- Artistic exhibits in the Penn State Lehigh Valley Concourse Gallery and Library Wing Gallery that focus on diversity like "Celebrations Around the World" featuring a look at major cultural celebrations throughout the world.
- Faculty Lecture Series that has included presentations on "Taoism: Key Concepts and Selected Practices" by Dr. William Newman; "Tales of a Female Nomad" by Rita Golden Gellman; and "The Sacred Text in the Community of Faith" featuring a panel of three key community religious leaders representing Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism.
- Student-driven events sponsored by the International Club, Spanish Club, and Asian-American Club have brought the understanding of various cultures to the forefront.
- The Penn State Lehigh Valley Community Arts and Culture Series which featured "An Evening with Mary Robinson," former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Campus performances by individuals like Javier Mendoza, The Healing Force, and Yewande.
- Other special campus events such as "A Day Without Art" for AIDS Awareness Day and "World Hunger Awareness" Day where participants randomly pick their socio-economic level for a meal reflective of that economic group.

The Diversity Committee is comprised of faculty, staff, and students who meet monthly to discuss diversity issues and/or concerns, as well as to set up programming that is available to everyone at the campus and, often, the Lehigh Valley community. Information about our diversity initiatives are disbursed through a number of venues:

- Restaurant tent cards announcing all diversity events
- Sandwich-board signage in the main student area announcing diversity events
- Posters about these events (lectures, panels, performances, etc.)
- Printed campus calendar noting all events is distributed to all faculty, staff, and students -- first-year students receive this at Orientation, all other students pick them up in the Atrium
- Calendar of Events on the Penn State Lehigh Valley Web site noting all diversity events
- E-mail invitations to faculty, staff, students, and an alumni listserve announcing these events
- News releases are sent to local media and the Penn State Lehigh Valley Newswire
- "Tradition" alumni magazine calendar of events sent to 13,000 local alumni

The process for disseminating diversity program information starts with the program being immediately added to the Web site calendar. A month prior to the event a news release is sent to the local media and announced on the Penn State Lehigh Valley Newswire. E-mail invitations/announcements normally go out to our various list-serves two to four weeks prior to the event. Posters are put up around campus two weeks prior, while restaurant tent cards and the sandwich board are displayed the week of the event.

Additionally, a number of faculty and staff attend workshops and trainings on diversity issues that are offered through Penn State University. All possible workshops are sent via e-mail notification for individuals to consider attending. Issues of diversity are also discussed at the Chancellor's Open Forum Meetings held each semester and at Faculty Senate Meetings.

We currently gauge our success of the diversity programs by the student, faculty, staff, and community attendance. Student-led club events held by the International Club, the Asian-American Club, and the Spanish Club are incredibly well attended and have promoted an understanding of cultural respect among our students. Another indicator of success is the fact that there have been very few reports of "unacceptance," "cultural or gender-bashing" on this campus.

CHALLENGE 2: CREATING A WELCOMING CAMPUS CLIMATE

After the University-wide reorganization in 2005, the leadership at the Lehigh Valley campus charged the campus' Wellness Committee – an active committee of faculty, staff, and students – with the additional responsibilities of the Diversity Committee. In addition to handling the diversity and wellness issues at the campus, this newly formed Wellness and Diversity Committee supports various student-driven events and the Penn State Lehigh Valley Community Arts and Culture Series.

The committee members observe campus interactions and discuss concerns and issues at monthly meetings. Student issues are brought to the committee from the SGA, as well as through individual students. Faculty issues are brought to the committee from the DAA and staff issues through the Office of the Chancellor. Committee members are extremely interactive with students and take opportunities to openly discuss a variety of current issues. The committee will pursue appropriate actions based on observations and University policies.

During summer 2006, Student Affairs staff was intentionally moved to a new office in the campus Multipurpose Room to create a welcoming student environment and to guide interactions for respect and courtesy of individuals as well as group satisfaction. Campus programming such as a hunger simulation, International Club, Spanish Club, Asian Club, and Adult Learners Club provide opportunities to foster understanding and greater interaction. For our non-traditional students, the campus employs an Evening/Weekend Administrator who meets with adult students at times that are convenient to them as well as advises the Adult Learners Student Club. Future initiatives include plans to create a sharing forum for students to discuss diversity issues.

We will increase resources by suggesting to the Senior Management Committee the designation of a staff person as the "Diversity Ombudsman." This appointment will be shared with the student, faculty, and staff community. Future faculty and staff training will include diversity training specifically on how to relate to students and how to address climate issues. These will be put into the campus diversity strategic plan to be implemented within the remaining time period covered by the 2004-2009 strategic plan period.

CHALLENGE 3: RECRUITING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

The Lehigh Valley campus is concerned about the retention rates of all of our students. There have been multiple steps specifically taken towards retaining our diverse student population. By having an Evening Administrator, we have an advisor available to assist students during evening and Saturday hours. Additionally, we have an Admissions Counselor who focuses specifically on transfer students. Both of these individuals are particularly useful to the non-traditional student.

For the students entering the university as Provisional, the CN ED 297B (College and Career Navigation) course teaching effective study strategies is being offered. A change that occurred during the split of the Berks-Lehigh Valley College was the redefining of the Disability Contact Liaison (DCL) position. While Berks-Lehigh Valley was together, the DCL was available on the Lehigh Valley campus only two days a week. Since the split, the DCL responsibilities have been absorbed by the Learning Center Coordinator. Now, students with disabilities have increased access to the DCL five days a week. Also of note is the diversity of the students employed as Peer Tutors in the Learning and Writing Centers on campus. Of the sixteen students who work in these centers, three represent non-white ethnic groups, three are non-traditional students, and another student is both non-white and nontraditional (44% being diverse). Peer tutoring is important to the retention of the entire student population; this diverse staff serves as positive role models and a valuable resource to the entire student body.

Following the University's reorganization in 2005, the establishment of a Diversity Committee on the Lehigh Valley campus was the first step toward a campus-wide collaboration. The committee meets monthly and has members representing students, faculty, and staff.

Penn State Lehigh Valley plans to expand the role and influence of the Diversity Committee with the development of the strategic plan. We will increase the visibility of Diversity Committee events by creating space in the main corridor of the Academic Building for information on diversity issues and events. Also on the agenda is to examine reasons for lower than average female student population at this campus and explore ways to attract more female students.

The Lehigh Valley campus faced the need to redefine our efforts in regards to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body as part of the University College. One interesting statistic that emerged regarding our campus is the fact that 17.3% of our student population is ethnically non-white (Fall 2005 Data Tables for a Framework to Foster Diversity). Comparatively, this is a larger percentage than either the University Park students (15.8% non-white) or the other Penn State Campuses' students as a whole (14.6% non-white) during the same time period. We are pleased with this information and look toward continuing to grow the diversity of our campus population.

CHALLENGE 4: RECRUITING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

At Penn State Lehigh Valley, all members of search committees for both faculty and staff are charged with being proactive in identifying and assessing the résumés from underrepresented groups. Search committees are notified by e-mail of any candidate who would contribute to the diversity of the campus. Faculty and senior management positions are advertised nationally and internationally. Continued efforts to target candidates in underrepresented groups will be stressed as senior staff and faculty retire or resign.

CHALLENGE 5: DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM THAT FOSTERS INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCIES

The success of any effort to foster a multicultural curriculum depends upon the desire and the ability of the faculty to deliver on those diversity efforts. Lehigh Valley has an abundance of faculty from diverse backgrounds and is fortunate to have many faculty members whose primary field of interest is intercultural understanding.

Additionally, the campus has been supportive of the creation of classes with multicultural emphasis. In recent years, a variety of classes have been created with intercultural curriculum including: first-year seminar classes, general education classes, special topics classes, continuing education classes, and upper level classes. The Lehigh Valley campus has encouraged faculty participation in committees seeking grants to study a variety of cultural issues and provide cultural experiences to students. For example, each year the honors students travel abroad. This year, a grant obtained from University Park enabled more honors students to participate in this experience. Closer to home, field trips are funded to diverse cultural centers such as a trip taken by an English 30 class to New York City to view *King Lear* at Harlem's Classical Theater.

Penn State Lehigh Valley has made strides increasing the variety of classes with intercultural understanding. First-year seminar classes play an important role in achieving this objective. For example, HD FS 287X, a first-year seminar class focuses on intercultural community building. This course is a service-learning offering and as part of the requirements, students serve as Pennsylvania Literacy Corps tutors for adult literacy programs, particularly helping the Hispanic community with English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Other classes examine cultural topics from diversity issues in the American education system to Japanese culture from a historical perspective. In addition, a new course, WL ED 400, is a language class for second language teaching for pre-service and practicing teachers. This course provides students with an opportunity to examine effective classroom strategies for working with diverse learners.

The campus also strives to offer a variety of general education classes that incorporate cultural differences into the general curriculum. For instance, the English curriculum includes works

from authors representing a wide variety of diverse populations. Finally, Continuing Education programs are a great resource for expanding cultural understanding in the community. Under these programs, the campus offers a course on valuing diversity in the workplace which examines the process of evolving from a monoculture to one that values and leverages diversity.

Beyond the courses specifically tailored to provide students with an exposure to diversity issues, many courses include cultural topics as a necessary component of student learning. The business program includes BA 322 – a business negotiation class with an entire lecture on how culture influences negotiations. This class also includes an in-depth examination of stereotyping, gender differences, and dealing with people from different countries from the negotiating perspective. The retailing class examines managing cultural differences in retailing, and the marketing course examines the multicultural aspects of marketing. Intercultural topics are also included in the nursing program with an entire chapter dedicated to diversity issues. The nursing class also examines cultural issues important to the practicing nurse in maternity and pediatric nursing.

The faculty have reported success with a variety of techniques. The most successful of these involves active participation in the culture of the community, such as the ESL program. Faculty have also reported success with role playing and real world examples of why understanding cultural differences is important to all professions. Additionally, the campus supports a series of lectures open to the student body from professionals from varied backgrounds discussing social and scientific issues.

Although a formal metric has not been developed to evaluate the campus' progress in improving cultural understanding and creating a metric capable of capturing the amount of cultural understanding achieved by students would be difficult, an informal appraisal could be performed. Such an informal appraisal could examine the number of courses offered with cultural content, the number of student contact hours with those in diverse communities, and the estimated number of hours of diversity topics covered in classes by category.

CHALLENGE 6: DIVERSIFYING UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Unit leaders encourage the interviewing and hiring of candidates from diverse backgrounds. They also encourage the attendance and promotion of related educational programs, both on and off campus. Additionally, all faculty and staff members are strongly encouraged to participate in community service and outreach that involves working with people from diverse backgrounds.

When looking at the diversity profile of the unit's administrative and executive levels, you must realize that Penn State Lehigh Valley is still in the reorganizational phase following the latest University reorganization. Hence, not all administrative positions are filled and/or identified in the current Penn State Lehigh Valley organizational chart. Presently, the campus only possesses one administrative position. In addition, there has been very little staff turnover during the past five years. In fact, there has not been a search in more than five years in one of the senior level staff positions or in the lone administrative position. However, for all other searches – the search committee considers how candidates might be able to contribute to the diversity of the campus.

The campus' breakdown per work grade classification is as follows:

By Ethnicity:

ADMR: 1 white

Staff:

26-32: 1 white

20-25: 1 Hispanic; 14 white

11-19: 1 Asian; 23 white

Comp: 3 white

Tech:

8-12: 3 white

1-7: 5 white

By Gender:

ADMR: 1 female

Staff:

26-32: 1 male

20-25: 9 female; 6 male

11-19: 22 female, 2 male

Comp: 1 female; 2 male

Tech:

8-12: 1 female; 2 male

1-7: 5 male

Outreach initiatives have provided the best experience for diversifying the perspectives of Penn State Lehigh Valley's faculty and staff. An example would include the volunteering of time and talents to assist in pre-college programs for at-risk teens coordinated through Continuing Education. These initiatives facilitate networking with community leaders and Penn State Lehigh Valley faculty and staff, as well as touch on the heart strings of all that volunteer.

There is not quantitative data to gauge Penn State Lehigh Valley's progress at this time. However, observation indicates that the faculty and staff enjoy participating in community outreach initiatives. The participation in programs has increased slightly during the past five years. Faculty and staff volunteer their time and talent at the following locations in the Greater Lehigh Valley region: Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley, 6th Street Shelter, Allentown Rescue Missions, Casa Guadalupe, Easton's Children Home, and various inner-city school districts.

CHALLENGE 7: COORDINATING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE TO SUPPORT OUR DIVERSITY

GOALS

Penn State Lehigh Valley is presently without a specific strategic plan following the reorganization to the University College. As the Lehigh Valley campus prepares to enter the next strategic planning cycle, it will reflect upon the importance of diversity with specific goals and objectives.

At this point, an EOPC representative has been identified designating a specific staff member to coordinate educational and outreach programs related to diversity, earmarking a small amount of funding to support on-campus lectures related to diversity, and further developing the Diversity Committee. Funding for diversity-related initiatives and programming is provided from a variety of sources via campus and non-campus channels. For example, funding is provided by the following budgets: the Student Activity Fee (SAF), Student Affairs and Enrollment Services, the Chancellor, and Division of Undergraduate Studies. External funds might support student scholarships as well as outreach initiatives (Master's program from the University of Turabo in the ESL program; Private Industry Council youth outreach program, Emerging Leaders Institute, youth summer camps, etc.).

By interacting with a variety of external groups, the campus has addressed diversity in a variety of approaches. Penn State Lehigh Valley has created effective partnerships with the following organizations: University of Turabo, National Writing Project, the Private Industry Council, Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley, 6th Street Shelter, Allentown Rescue Missions, Casa Guadalupe, Easton's Children Home, and various inner-city school districts. Faculty and staff are encouraged to attend diversity training programs and participate in these programs.

Penn State Lehigh Valley will continue its efforts to create a Diversity Strategic Plan.

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Note: We look forward to seeing the next round of best practices to see how we can utilize ideas that have proven to be effective and apply them to our own campus.