

**Feedback on Final Update on Progress Implementing  
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09  
College of Agricultural Sciences  
Spring 2010**

The College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) presented an informative update that demonstrates its continued commitment to achieving positive diversity outcomes. CAS is particularly commended for its methodical approach to identifying action items directed at the recommendations of the mid-term feedback report. Also, it appears that the new multicultural coordinator has been thoroughly integrated into the College leadership.

The update neither systematically addresses the CAS diversity strategic plan nor answers *Framework* assessment questions. The review team would have appreciated a rationale for omitting these components of *Framework* reporting. Also, the update seemed thin on CAS activities at campuses other than UP. Obviously, extending initiatives across Penn State has its own set of constraints, but some work should occur at campuses beyond UP, and the update should identify these activities.

The update outlines many CAS diversity endeavors across all *Framework* Challenges, and CAS has even received a prestigious national diversity award. But the focus of the update is on activity and not on measuring progress against a concrete set of outcomes performance indicators that define success. The update does report on many notable outcomes, including enrollment, employment, graduation, and other diversity outcomes, and metrics are sprinkled among these outcomes. But these outcomes and metrics are not contextualized with the full range of strategic planning tools: benchmarks, baselines, measurement of progress against these baselines, and projected thresholds of accomplishment that delineate progress. These tools are essential to successful strategic planning.

Finally, though much useful information was presented in the appendices, the convention of embedding appendices as links at the end of the update made it awkward to access some of these materials. Some of the links were emails with attachments embedded in the emails, and some of these attachments couldn't be opened. In the future, it would be better to simply include the material as actual text at the end of the update. Also, some of the appendices seemed clearly related to the main thrusts of the update whereas other material was more tangential. Some links led to activities that CAS appeared not to be directly involved in; instead, they seemed to simply distribute information about the endeavors of other units.

### **Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

#### ***Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity***

- ❖ The review team acknowledges the College's definition of diversity to include categories beyond race, gender and sexual orientation, such as disability and religious status.
- ❖ The Diversity Council has been very active with diversity-related programming, training, and dissemination of diversity information. Filling the multicultural coordinator position and quickly incorporating the new person into a leadership role in the College are also noteworthy.
- ❖ The work of Cooperative Extension is exemplary, as the achievement of a national diversity award from the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service amply demonstrates.

#### ***Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate***

- ❖ The College is commended for using the outcomes of the campus climate survey to identify the areas of gender and class as targeted areas for improving climate. Other outstanding points are CAS plans to implement the upcoming recommendations of the faculty/staff survey task force and for efforts at increasing leadership gender diversity, thereby signaling that women are welcome and valued in CAS.

### **Representation (Access and Success)**

#### ***Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body***

- ❖ CAS efforts to recruit a diverse student body are impressive. The College participates in many recruitment programs, leveraging its current diversity to attract an even more diverse student population. Despite its many efforts, representation among students from some key diversity constituents remains

below some obvious benchmarks, such as the overall population of Pennsylvania or several other Penn State colleges. How do CAS's most important performance indicators compare with other colleges of agriculture at predominantly white institutions? Rather than the review team speculating on which benchmarks should be used, CAS should clearly articulate its own aspirations against benchmarks it considers most appropriate and mark progress against these benchmarks and its own baselines. For example, CAS evidences progress on the graduate student front, but is it a leading producer of diverse Ph.D. graduates in agriculture? Are graduate student overall numbers for recruitment and retention as impressive as CAS efforts? CAS should ask these kinds of provocative questions of itself and direct innovative solutions at effective solutions.

- ❖ In addition to continuing its current programming, CAS might consider partnering with student-run multicultural groups on campus to conduct workshops for new first-year students to educate them about the plethora of majors and career paths available to students in CAS.
- ❖ Recruitment at historically black colleges and universities and Hispanic serving institutions, along with the provision of fellowships, are yielding positive results. The review team commends CAS for its success in retaining these students. The team notes that in the CAS 2010-15 *Framework* diversity strategic plan, tribal colleges and universities will soon be part of the College's recruitment portfolio.

#### ***Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce***

- ❖ The review team acknowledges continued improvement, primarily in the areas of race/ethnicity and gender among the faculty and the leadership of the College. The Cooperative Extension fellowships are laudable, but have they contributed to permanent diversity hires within Extension? CAS's participation in the University Administrative Fellow program is also noteworthy.
- ❖ The 10.7% hire rate for diverse groups is an exemplary accomplishment, but further analysis is needed. How does the rate compare with the current composition of CAS? What about turnover rates? Only by probing deeply into the data will the College come to fully understand the dimensions of its recruitment/retention dynamic and be able to implement the most effective interventions to promote success.

#### **Education and Scholarship**

##### ***Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum that Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies***

- ❖ Curriculum and study abroad programs are an area of strength for the College, as is the Spanish program for students, which has as its goal developing the communication skills and cultural awareness needed to work with Spanish-speaking agricultural workers. Domestic diversity curricular efforts appear less robust.

#### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

##### ***Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management***

- ❖ CAS is again commended for supporting one of its women faculty of color within the Administrative Fellows Program.
- ❖ As the update also acknowledges, the pipeline and leadership retention problems mentioned need further analysis. The College surmises that some portion of the problem is due to better opportunities outside of Penn State, but might other factors also be present? Does CAS have a systematic exit interview process?

##### ***Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Diversity Goals***

- ❖ The overall strategic planning of the College has significant diversity components.
- ❖ The College is especially applauded for requiring CAS leadership to document diversity efforts and tying these efforts to leadership success and compensation. The College should also consider requesting that faculty document diversity-related efforts (such as scholarship, overseeing or developing study abroad programs, or supervising theses related to the study of diversity issues) as a part of their annual faculty reviews so that all faculty begin to think about integrating diversity into their teaching, scholarship and service.