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

The College of Information Science and Technology (IST) provides a lengthy, detailed, progressive account of the seven *Framework* Challenges. Noteworthy are: the Dean's involvement and sharing of the College's diversity commitment with IST stakeholders. The follow through to conduct a Climate Survey in 2006, and the establishment of the Dean's Diversity Task Force in 2007 were two significant evaluative College actions. Three important initiatives appear: 1) to encourage greater gender and ethnic diversity in the undergraduate IST population, 2) to continue to develop a welcoming and nurturing environment for all employees and students, and 3) to improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Laudably, the recent hiring of a new director for Multicultural Affairs should help with implementation. The difficulty associated with frequent turn over in previous leadership positions in this area is recognized.

The appendices list several initiatives to show the progress of many varied activities/programs. Lacking was the specificity for how program success was measured. For example, the Outreach Program lists the number of k-12 participants, but there is no mention of pre or post survey results (or other assessments) to gauge program success. The review team recommends the College retain its priority to establish, "better metrics and measurables to assess progress with meeting *Framework* challenges" (p. 33).

<u>**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**</u>
Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
- ❖ Diversity information is commendably distributed to faculty and staff via various methods; discussions at Academic Leadership Council, e-mails, student meetings with the Dean, Undergraduate Advisory Council meetings, yearly staff meetings, and other venues. ***RESPONSE: We continue to distribute information in these ways.***
- ❖ It is admirable that posters and banners are strategically placed throughout the IST building. ***RESPONSE: Although this was not implemented until the end of the 04-09 plan, we are confident that it will make a difference during the time period of the new Framework (2010-2015).***
- ❖ First-Year Seminar focused worthily on diversity-related topics in technology. ***RESPONSE: This, too, was not implemented until the end of the 04-09 plan; but we are confident that it will make a difference during the time period of the new framework (2010-2015).***
  A more prominent place for diversity initiatives on the "About IST" section of the Web page is recommended. ***RESPONSE: IST will be rolling out a new website in fall of 2010. The director of Multicultural Affairs has worked with the web design team to make changes such as those suggested here.***
- ❖ The diversity committee has a broad representation of members. The shift made from the committee drafting and implementing the diversity plan to community building is commendable.
- ❖ The use of alternative media formats (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) should prove successful to reach students. ***RESPONSE: Our IT group monitors how many students follow us, and indicators look good so far.***
- ❖ Requiring members of faculty search committees and the director of Multicultural Affairs to attend a special orientation session on guidelines for recruiting a diverse workforce is positive. The College could consider instituting a training session to reach all faculty and supervisory or management staff. ***RESPONSE: At the annual fall retreat for both staff and faculty, a session, facilitated by the Affirmative Action Office, will be included to address this issue so that a wide audience will be included in the training.***
- ❖ The review team acknowledges that turnover in the Assistant Dean for Equity and Diversity position throughout the 2004-09 planning cycle has made implementation difficult. Changes as of 2009 show potential. ***RESPONSE: With new leadership in place, diversity is back on IST's agenda. The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), formerly Office of Equity and Diversity, is currently located in the dean's***

suite. The director is a member of the Dean's Administrative Council; the director meets biweekly in a one-on-one meeting with the dean.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Various methods are notably used to assess the climate, e.g., focus groups, parent/student phone surveys, etc.
- ❖ The creation of student led diversity organizations, i.e., Diversity Network is excellent. Continued collaborations with other student diversity groups are recommended. ***RESPONSE: The OMA is creating a Multicultural Advisory Council. Representation will include a member from Women in IST (WIST), Diversity Network (D-Net), and IST Student Government. In addition, the OMA is developing a mentor/recruitment committee whose membership will be comprised of representatives from these groups. WIST continues to participate in Women in the Sciences and Engineering (WISE) activities; OMA continues to support activities and programs offered by Graduate Women in Science (GWIS). In addition, underrepresented graduate students are affiliated with the Ph.D Project, a national mentoring program sponsored by KPMG. Current IST faculty serves as mentors in this program (Dr. Lynette Kvasny, Dr. Roderick Lee, and Dr. Rhoda Joseph).***
- ❖ It is commendable that IST included all information from the May 2006 Climate Survey Report and the January 2008 Diversity Task Force Report; this shows a certain transparency regarding these issues. The College has made efforts to improve the current data situation; the Diversity Task Force Report begins to pull this information together and make note of valid concerns and potential solutions. A more systematic approach may be helpful. ***RESPONSE: The College recognized the need for a more organized effort in this area. In August 2009 a director of Multicultural Affairs was hired for this purpose. Since then she has worked to re-establish partnerships with IST administration, faculty, staff, and student groups. She has also re-established communication with similar offices across the University Park campus, and established connections with other Penn State campus locations.***
- ❖ The Diversity Task Force, established by the Dean, reported that 76% of respondents (261) experienced negativism with respect to different characteristics, including gender, race, ethnicity, age, and others. Also reported was that 63 % of respondents have heard offensive casual conversation. The continuation of focus groups with the Dean and multicultural coordinator should help to identify where problems exist and provide solutions. The 2012 mid-point progress report should contain these outcomes. ***RESPONSE: We plan to conduct a climate survey in the 2010-11 academic year.***
- ❖ Potential best practice: exit interviews with graduating masters' and Ph.D. students.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ 2008 data show a 1.1 % decrease in undergraduate female enrollment compared to 2005 data; however, stronger recruitment efforts resulted in a 9 % increase in graduate female enrollment in 2008. ***RESPONSE: We are aware of the discrepancy in the undergraduate female enrollment. We will be capitalizing on the increase in female enrollment at the graduate level to help strengthen recruitment and retention efforts of the undergraduate female student population through joint activities, recruitment activities (particularly at HBCU's and other ethnically-serving colleges and universities) and mentoring programs. Data for the 2009-10 academic year will be analyzed and reported. This data will continue to be captured and analyzed annually.***
- ❖ In 2007, IST committed to refocusing its efforts to capture data to gauge the success of recruiting male and female student participants of its various programs. A detailed description in the report would be helpful. ***RESPONSE: The creation of the Bachelor of Arts degree in the fall of 2009 is anticipated to provide a significantly increased pool of female participants due to widely increased intellectual diversity in the areas of the arts, education, health, humanities, etc. We have expanded our interest code pool for inviting students to participate in our recruiting programs, thereby increasing the potential for reaching more female students from the Liberal Arts/Professional majors. Recruiting programs have expanded their reach to include students that have a traditional notion of a major and show them how it fits into and broadens their vision for future employment. For example, students who***

have expressed an interest in criminal justice as an intended major may be satisfied with our SRA major from the security aspect or IST from the technology aspect because the criminal justice field incorporates not only security issues but the use of advanced technology available today. Students who have expressed interest in a foreign language major can expand on this interest to connect to security-related government service with the IST or SRA major to expand the choice of future careers. The director of IT has been brought on board of the Diversity Committee to facilitate the creation of a formal process for capturing and reporting of this data. The current vision is to use online forms that collect qualitative as well as quantitative data of event registrations, activity reporting, and survey data. In addition, we will implement a survey tool to identify the reasons behind a change of major to IST/SRA.

- ❖ The 2007 Diversity Task Force was a notable initiative and its results are an excellent resource for IST. Its recommendation that developing and maintaining a diverse student body will require a more systemic approach from all members of the College is particularly important. ***RESPONSE: The current Diversity Committee will connect the recommendations of the task force as a frame of reference for various committees and offices to organically affect change through implementation of the recommendations. Furthermore, the implementation of the recommendations will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in faculty meetings, staff meetings, student organization meetings, town hall meetings, and so forth to ensure community buy-in. The Diversity Committee is chaired by the Director of Multicultural Affairs, who reports directly to the Dean of the College. In turn, the Director of Multicultural Affairs meets with the Dean's Administrative Council (DAC) to report out on progress of the Diversity Committee activities. Issues related to diversity actions are coordinated via the DAC to reach all components of the college.***

- ❖ Based upon the Task Force information, IST has offered various programs and methods of recruiting and retaining underrepresented student groups; WIST; D-NET; focus groups; advisory board interviews; and climate surveys. Yet, reported numbers reflect a decrease in enrollment and a decrease in numbers of students being retained from 'all' underrepresented groups. ***RESPONSE: As a discovery college, we have seen a smaller initial enrollment than other colleges; however, once students become aware of what we have to offer, we see an increase in interest and enrollment. In an effort to meet students at the point of their need, a Student-Recruitment Team, consisting of majority and underrepresented group students is being formalized in the college to serve as recruiters at their former high schools. A request has been made that a designated officer or representative from the current student organizations (WIST, D-Net, etc.) be selected to represent them to act as liaisons in recruitment and retention efforts through the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Additionally, making more visible the current support resources, IST Honors Society, classroom Learning Assistants, electronic educational reviews, and solicitation and training of mentors—both academic and social. A training component will be in place to prepare them for these events, as well as IST paraphernalia to ensure their credibility in their presentations.***

  The college is in the process of defining the position of college recruitment officer which will be integral to the current recruitment efforts and the creation of new approaches to improve outcomes. Recruitment includes undergraduate, graduate and online educational programs.
- ❖ Potential best practice: the IST Phone-a-Thon.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ IST has been more successful in diversifying its faculty than its staff. Enhanced data matrixes and support for the diversity of staff should become a higher priority. Benchmarking successful programs from other colleges or administrative units may be helpful. Also consider tapping into the Office of Human Resources for programs on Professional Entry, Staff Assistant Training, IT Internships, etc., as well as the Staff Advisory Committee. ***RESPONSE: Agreed, the college has been more successful at diversifying its faculty. The college has been making efforts to work on this issue. All of our positions are taken to the outside posting. Consultation with Steve Hayes and the Diversity Talent Bank is made with each opening. The diversity committee will utilize the next planning period to benchmark with other units and gather best practices to see what will work within our college. The college has created its own***

internal Staff Advisory Committee which will provide a member on a subcommittee of the Diversity Committee that will be responsible for the recruitment of staff. The college will be looking at budgeting money for staff recruitment to diversify staff pools.

❖ In the 2006 update the Dean promised details on retention strategies by the end of 2007, yet none were articulated. *RESPONSE: Dean Thomas left the college in 2006. During the tenure of Dean Foley, the climate for a welcoming work/life balance has been implemented. Professional development has been encouraged for all staff. In 2010-11, in coordination with the climate survey, retention strategies will be reviewed and articulated.*

❖ It is recognized in the update that "few changes have been experienced with respect to the racial/ethnic diversity of our staff. The gender balance remains predominately female as we grow our staff." However, explanations regarding why this is the case or how this could change are not discussed. *RESPONSE: We recognize this is an issue and continue to struggle with increasing the diversity of our staff positions. We discussed previously strategies to help address this. There are many layers to the issue of diversity and at this point it is our priority in this group to focus on the ethnic diversity of our college especially in the realm of non-exempt staff positions. Consideration is being given to expanding our geographic search area with potential funding for travel to encourage a more diverse applicant pool.*

❖ Leadership positions have not changed; however there has been an increase in "middle management" diversity. *RESPONSE: As the college has continued to grow, the executive leadership positions have been cut from the original makeup of the college. We have seen the need to increase the middle management layer which consists mostly of staff positions. There have been four female directors named since the creation of this plan. This strategy has been successful for IST in terms of recruiting and diversifying staff in the college. As the college moves forward, the potential exists for reevaluating the executive level infrastructure and improving diversity at the executive level.*

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

❖ Financial support and training opportunities to assist faculty with course development and revision is laudable. *RESPONSE: We continue to provide this support and have begun to tie support to assessment efforts—including assessing students' attainment of curricular goals related to diversity.*

❖ A variety of coursework now includes activities focused on diversity – IST 110S, IST 301, IST 431, IST 440W. Future inclusion of enrollment data and teacher effectiveness ratings would help to gauge course success. *RESPONSE: We have plans to assess not just whether teachers are perceived to be effective but whether students are learning—reaching the curricular goals that we have for them regarding diversity.*

❖ The Center for the Information Society was established in 2003 for diversity-related research. Much of the projects and research produced are commendable; reasons for the center no longer being operational are unclear. *RESPONSE: The Center for the Information Society (CIS) no longer exists for two main reasons: lack of a named faculty leader and high demands on research funding to sustain the center. Note: This occurred in a time when there was a university-level push to close "unproductive" centers— "unproductive" with regard to producing grant monies.*

❖ The wConnect research community is an innovative initiative, but few details of success are provided. *RESPONSE: The link for the research community and all of its activities is: https://collab.ist.psu.edu/wconnectoutreach/*

❖ IST has successfully integrated diversity initiatives within the elective curriculum; however, as noted in the update, this is seen as the least successful strategy. Suggested is better utilization of resources to incorporate intercultural and international competencies within the core IST courses. *RESPONSE: We have two proposals on the table for adding courses to the sophomore year that would address diversity. At least one of these would be a required course.*

❖ Potential best practices: institutionalized professional development offerings on the topic of diversity for undergraduate and graduate student classroom assistants; endeavors developed and carried out through the Office of Learning Initiatives. Measurable outcomes could establish these as best practices. *RESPONSE: We will investigate how to measure outcomes.*

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ IST made a positive step to reevaluate the collapsed position of the Associate Dean of the Office for Diversity, Outreach, and International Engagement. The funding and hiring of a new director for multicultural affairs lends credence to the College's diversity commitment. The current director's involvement with Penn State's Academic Council on Multicultural Affairs and other University diversity groups should help to bring new ideas to IST.
- ❖ Strides to diversify middle management have proven successful for females and underrepresented males.
- ❖ The executive profile of leadership continues to reflect male dominance; however current vacancies should allow the search teams to renew efforts to "diversify and enrich the search process." Providing data would be helpful. ***RESPONSE: The most recent vacancy for the director of development was successfully filled with a female.***
- ❖ Service of several faculty and staff on the three Presidential Commissions is praiseworthy. Leadership roles on University committees should translate to promotional opportunities within IST.
- ❖ It is acknowledged that enhanced metrics and planning to augment diversity initiatives in this area are needed.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Employment of the new director of multicultural diversity is a plus.
- ❖ The College is applauded for its Zero Tolerance for Hate and Sexual Harassment Policy.