

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

The Schreyer Honors College (SHC) is commended for sustaining and growing diversity efforts during a time of significant leadership change. The review team notes SHC's efforts to develop collaborations and partnerships, disseminate information to its students to encourage them to attend diversity events, support professional development among its staff, and provide leadership in curricular innovation.

The final update does not provide substantive details on many SHC efforts, to the degree that the College's mid-term update was more informative than the final update. This lack might have been remedied by answering the 2004-09 *Framework* assessment questions and/or systematically updating the SHC 2004 diversity strategic plan, but the update did not follow these conventions. Also, the update could have been strengthened by a better use of strategic planning tools, such as consistent use of performance indicators to assess its initiatives, benchmarking against peers, establishing baselines against outcomes measures, projecting thresholds that define success for further accomplishment, and then measuring progress at appropriate intervals when programming interventions have had a chance to work. As the College looks to the future, it might do well to consider how best to assess the impact of its many activities to determine which ones are most effective. Finally, though the listserv postings in Appendix A were certainly helpful, the review team noted that, in fact, most if the items mentioned were not actual SHC programs. That this section comprises the bulk of the update can, if nothing else, foster an impression that items in the update that were outgrowths of SHC's own programming were not as strong a priority.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The three-session diversity series for all SHC staff is a constructive effort toward cultivating a shared understanding of diversity. Because no analysis of participant assessment is provided, the effectiveness of this initiative is unclear.
- ❖ SHC is commended for including sexual orientation in its definition of diversity, as recommended on the feedback to the mid-term progress report.
- ❖ Although SHC is doing an admirable job of sharing listserv announcements about workshops and programs on a broad range of diverse topics from many units, information about LGBT student activities is more sporadic. SHC might consider including weekly information from the LGBT Student Resource Center and Support Network. It also might review past listserv messages to determine whether or not other underrepresented/underserved groups also have been omitted inadvertently. Regarding SHC programming itself, topics on race/ethnicity and gender appear to be most prominent.
- ❖ The workshop "Leading the way—Promoting Diversity and Inclusion from Within" is a potentially important effort. It is unclear, however, whether or not feedback on the session was analyzed to help shape future activities.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ In its mid-term update, SHC indicated they would be conducting an "Academic Community Survey" in spring 2007, but no information on the survey was provided in the final update. Did the survey move forward and, if so, what were the results?
- ❖ Using orientation programming to engage new and returning students in mentoring is positive.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Some programs, such as partnerships to develop a multi-pronged recruitment strategy, have borne fruit. However, a more robust and systematic approach is needed. For example, the update provided no further information on scholarships (cf., SHC's response to the mid-term feedback report). Critical questions remain that call for thoughtful and forceful initiatives: Why do some diverse groups increasingly turn down offers, which has resulted in relatively stagnant yield rates, and what is the comparative yield rate

for mainstream students? What are the goals for a diverse group of Scholars, and which interventions have worked best in driving change? What about more aggressive “gateway” admission initiatives for diverse students? Do diverse Scholars graduate at the same rate as their peers (both the overall and the “Scholar” graduation rate)?

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The enhancement of the diversity profile of honors advisors and increase in male staff within SHC is noteworthy, though no data appear on the age shifts reported in the update or in other areas that would demonstrate an overall augmentation of staff diversity.
- ❖ That some students “do not like being singled out” reinforces the importance of having staff with expertise in anticipating the needs of a diverse student body.
- ❖ Enhancing a current position to “Director of Diversity Outreach and Engagement” should prove effective in institutionalizing the College’s commitment to diversity.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The increase in the number of resident honors courses meeting US/IL requirements and the significantly increased numbers of students enrolling in them are important accomplishments resulting from the SHC/LA partnership.
- ❖ SHC has nurtured innovative course development which, with positive data outcomes presented, could be a best practice. Given problems with expanding model courses, SHC might do well to reexamine the tricky issue of how best to take advantage of faculty expertise while avoiding investing heavily in courses that cannot be sustained if a faculty member leaves or loses interest. Perhaps outside-the-box thinking could place SHC in more of a leadership role in developing and sustaining courses so that the College is not as dependent on the goodwill of individual faculty.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ SHC is commended for its support of staff seeking degrees, but without further detail (e.g., release time or do staff have to make up hours?) it is harder to judge what this support looks like.
- ❖ The update notes that some staff have completed degrees and left for higher positions, and other staff serve on University committees, sometimes in leadership roles. These points are all well and good, but some reflection should occur on how these achievements make a tangible impact on institutional diversity. Did any staff attain higher positions within the University?

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The collaborative efforts of the College are commended as an example of how the University as a whole should be working to achieve our diversity goals. However, no detail on an overarching strategy guiding partnership formation or on effectiveness of collaborative efforts is presented.