

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
College of Health and Human Development

The academic departments in the College of Health and Human Development address issues of diversity, multiculturalism, and equity within the curriculum and this would suggest a foundation for a well-informed and well-integrated diversity strategic plan for HHD. While there are indications throughout the document that suggest that there is support for diversity initiatives within the College, it appears that diversity is viewed as an “add-on” rather than recognized as integral to the vitality of the College’s mission. **RESPONSE:** *We regret that our first draft left readers with the impression that we viewed diversity as an “add-on” rather than recognizing it as integral to the vitality of the College of Health and Human Development (HHD). Nothing could be further from reality. We are fully aware of the centrality of diversity to our mission and embrace these issues in our instructional responsibilities, our research and our outreach activities. We have now bolstered the introductory statements in the revised draft to reaffirm the importance of these issues to the study of health and human development. As we now indicate in several sections throughout the revised document, “Age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation assume a central role in determining human health and well-being.”*

The College has identified problem areas and needs under each Challenge; however, it does not appear that strategies have been developed to address them. Information on implementation strategies, responsible parties, resources needed, timeframes, assessment measures, and accountability should be included for action items in the plan. These critical components of effective planning were notably absent. For continuing practices, it would be useful to know what assessment criteria were used to determine if the practice should be continued. **RESPONSE:** *We have now added a “Measures of Success” section under each of the 22 strategic actions. Indeed, in the revised document we list and describe 55 measures of success that detail the activities, time frames and responsible parties for each of the strategic actions.*

The organization of the report, which subsumed 2004-09 plans under the 1998-2003 final report, made review difficult. **RESPONSE:** *In the revised submissions, the two reports have been separated completely.* The Review Team is discouraged by the superficial nature of planning and particularly dismayed that no planning is noted under the dimension of Institutional Viability and Vitality. Planning of this nature is essential for a coherent and effective approach to diversity and equity. **RESPONSE:** *(The revised report contains both “Strategic Actions” and “Measures of Success” for both of the challenges (6 and 7) subsumed under the heading “Institutional Viability and Vitality.” Under Challenge 6 (Diversifying University Leadership and Management) we offer two strategic actions and four accompanying measures of success. See pages 15 to 17. Under Challenge 7 (Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals) we propose four strategic actions and 11 measures of success. See pages 17 to 21.)*

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ Creating a tiered diversity committee structure to include a College-wide committee and a committee within each academic unit is positive. Information about the composition, charge, proposed activities, anticipated timelines, and communication mechanisms should be included. **RESPONSE:** *(We have attempted to address these issues in the revised draft and have provided more information on the details of how the new committee structure will be implemented and operated. Please see Strategic Action #19 on pages 18 and 19 of the revised document.)*

- ❖ The College's plan to devote time bi-monthly at College executive committee meetings to discuss best practices for diversity across the academic units is positive. Appointing the director of Diversity Enhancement Programs as a permanent member of the Executive Committee is recommended to provide a continual focus on diversity and better integration of diversity in the administrative structure of the College.

RESPONSE: (We have adopted the committee's recommendation and will include the director of HHD Diversity Enhancement Programs in all future meetings of the HHD Executive Committee. See Strategic Action #21 on page 20.)

- ❖ Attention to communicating the inclusive concept of diversity as developed by the diversity committee is encouraged so that there is a shared understanding of diversity that would serve as a foundation for the College's diversity efforts.

RESPONSE: (See Strategic Action #2 on page 2 of the revised document. Dean Coward will increase his direct communication with HHD faculty and staff regarding diversity practices and accomplishments within the College to stimulate a shared and inclusive commitment to fostering diversity.)

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Conducting a second climate survey of undergraduate students is positive. The College should consider broadening the focus of the survey to focus on climate for all underrepresented groups, not only "students of color." *RESPONSE: The initial survey of HHD undergraduate students conducted in 2003 did employ a broad solicitation of diverse students. It did not focus only on "students of color." Indeed, students were asked about their gender, if they had a disability or impairment that substantially limited a major life activity, their racial or ethnic identity and their sexual identity. However, in only two of these categories (gender and racial/ethnic identity) were there sufficient sample sizes to conduct meaningful statistical comparisons. In the disability and sexual identity groups there were not enough respondents to perform meaningful comparisons. Approximately one percent of the respondents (13 of 1,148) identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual; whereas only two percent (24 of 1,148) reported that they had a disability or impairment that substantially limited a major life activity. Neither of these two rates provided a sufficient sample to draw meaningful comparisons. In the proposed 2006 survey, we will retain this broad definition of diversity. However, we are not optimistic that our sampling procedures will result in sufficient sample sizes to conduct meaningful comparisons among all diverse groups.*

The College should also consider assessing climate for its graduate students and staff. *RESPONSE: See Strategic Action #8, page 7, for a description of our intentions for collecting information regarding the campus climate for diverse graduate students enrolled in HHD academic programs.* Information on how surveys and other assessment mechanisms will be used to develop action plans should be included.

- ❖ Follow-up to the climate survey for faculty is not addressed in the action plan. Actions to address the issues raised by the survey and discussion groups are necessary. *RESPONSE: Dean Coward intends to create a regular opportunity – four times per year – for diverse faculty to meet with him and discuss issues such as those raised in the original climate survey for faculty conducted in 2001 – see Strategic Action #13 on pages 11 and 12.*

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The College's willingness to undertake a self-assessment and cost/benefit analysis of participation in the Minority Access for Research Careers (MARC) is noteworthy.
- ❖ Building on the success of the Carlson project to develop similar projects in other academic units is positive.
- ❖ The College should consider expanding its initiative to build institutional relationships to recruit African-American students by developing similar relationships with institutions and organizations serving additional diverse populations (such as Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and additional professional organizations). ***RESPONSE: The College of Health and Human Development will consider expanding our efforts to these parallel institutions when our relationships with a small, select group of historically Black colleges and universities have been institutionalized and are operating at peak efficiency. We are not yet at that point. Until then, we believe that our efforts and resources would be diluted if we were to expand the focus of our efforts – and our outcomes diminished. In the meantime, we have lots more to do – and to accomplish – working with additional historically Black institutions. See Strategic Action #11 on pages 9 and 10.***

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The College's commitment to successfully recruit ten new minority faculty members over the course of the next five years is notable.
- ❖ To complement its recruitment efforts, the College should consider developing formalized retention initiatives appropriate to the culture and needs of Health and Human Development to support the success and retention of underrepresented faculty. ***RESPONSE: See Strategic Action #14 on pages 12 and 13. We expect that this systematic review, identification and dissemination of best-practices related to the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups will improve and institutionalize our efforts.***
- ❖ Action plans to address recruitment and retention of staff from underrepresented groups should be developed. ***RESPONSE: Again, see Strategic Action #14 on pages 12 and 13.***
- ❖ The College should consider acknowledging and appropriately valuing contributions to diversity in the context of service within the tenure and promotion process and in staff reviews. ***RESPONSE: The College is unaware of any evidence that it does not value the contributions of our faculty to diversity in the promotion and tenure process and in staff reviews. Indeed, we are uncertain how this comment emerges from the report that we submitted. If the review committee is aware of specific incidences where HHD has not valued such contributions in its promotion and tenure process, we would appreciate receiving that information.***

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The College is commended for its financial commitment to faculty who are creating courses with diversity content.
- ❖ As it continues to develop new courses focused on multicultural topics, the College is encouraged to expand its focus beyond race/ethnicity to include issues of gender, disabilities, and sexual orientation. ***RESPONSE: This was always our intention. Unfortunately, this was not clearly communicated in the first draft of our plan. The text of the revised document has been modified to express this intention more clearly. Please see Strategic Action #15 on pages 13 and 14.***

Institutional Viability and Vitality

- ❖ As noted in the opening paragraph, no planning or goals were included for either Challenge 6 or Challenge 7. This is an especially egregious omission given the focus of the Challenges on sustaining institutional viability and vitality through long-term planning for diversity at the administrative level. With no information to indicate the College's direction under these Challenges for the next five years, the Review Team could not accurately assess and provide feedback on initiatives. Several salient recommendations are provided under each Challenge. ***RESPONSE: As mentioned earlier, this omission has been corrected in the revised document. Both strategic actions and measures of success are described under both challenges.***

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The College is encouraged to develop formalized initiatives to identify and support underrepresented individuals with leadership potential and to identify internal and external opportunities for leadership development. ***RESPONSE: See Strategic Actions #17 and #18 on pages 15 to 17. We believe that both of these actions address the concerns of the committee regarding the development of formalized initiatives to identify and support underrepresented individuals with leadership potential.***
- ❖ The College is also encouraged to pursue networking and recruiting resources through conferences, multicultural professional organizations, the Affirmative Action Office, and the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity to broaden pools of applicants for leadership positions. ***RESPONSE: See, in particular, Strategic Action #18 on pages 16 and 17.***

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The College should consider expanding its emphasis on faculty positions focusing on multicultural issues to include issues related to gender, disability, and sexual orientation. ***RESPONSE: We believe that the College of Health and Human Development is among the leading academic units on campus with respect to the gender diversity of its tenured and tenure-eligible faculty. Nearly half (65 of 152 or 43%) of our tenured or tenure-eligible faculty are women. Indeed, among faculty at the rank of assistant professor, women constitute a slight majority of our faculty (21 of 40 or 53%). At the same time, the College of Health and Human Development boasts the highest percentage of women among its full professors (38%) of all academic units at University Park. Thus, we do not believe that we need a special recruitment effort focused on attracting women to our faculty. For example, since January 1, 2004, eleven new tenured or tenure-eligible faculty members have been added to our ranks. Of those hires, five were women. In terms of the other two categories mentioned (i.e., disability and sexual orientation) we would welcome the advice of the review committee to identify best-practices that are not already being used to recruit individuals with these characteristics.***

- ❖ The College should reconsider the position of director of Diversity Enhancement Programs and include her as a fully active participant in all aspects of the college leadership. *RESPONSE: See Strategic Action #21 on page 20. This strategic action makes clear our intention to include the director of HHD Diversity Enhancement Programs in all future meetings of the Executive Committee of the College of Health and Human Development.*
- ❖ The College should develop and institute initiatives that address organizational realignment, systems of accountability, resource mobilization and allocation strategies, and long-term planning strategies necessary to ensure realization of the College and University's diversity goals. Emphasis on diversity in the mission statement and general strategic plan of the unit and prioritizing diversity initiatives beyond scholarship endowments in development campaigns would facilitate an integrated approach.