

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
School of Information Sciences and Technology

The new statement is strong, inclusive, and speaks to community. The plans for the Assistant Dean of Equity and Diversity as well as the new recruiter for undergraduate programs have the potential to move this School forward in research, multiculturalism, and globalization. "Inspiring Solutions" is a strong mission statement. The plan is well thought out in its identification of responsible units and timeframes, and the need for continued work to foster diversity through on-going activities. Much of the responsibility for leadership, oversight, and accountability of the School's diversity efforts seem to rest with the assistant dean for equity and diversity. IST is encouraged to seek a balanced and equitable distribution of responsibilities including evaluation and accountability of the efforts among the offices of the assistant dean, undergraduate recruiting coordinator, diversity committee, and other key diversity stakeholders.

RESPONSE: With respect to this last point, we agree, and will seek the advice of the diversity committee.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The planned Diversity in IST Conferences with inclusion of student presentations/participation could be a best practice.
- ❖ IST's diversity plan indicates increased sensitivity to inclusion and awareness of diversity as being integral to the unit, and is reinforced regularly through courses, the Web site, and orientation activities for students and employees.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ IST is commended for conducting climate surveys on a regular basis. It should be noted that although it is important to conduct surveys, it is also important to allow sufficient time between surveys to adequately address survey results. *RESPONSE: It is critical to have the time to implement interventions and allow time for them to become effective (or not) before resurveying. We are anxious to receive the results of the University's Faculty Staff survey to glean insight into climate and community issues.*
- ❖ IST has indicated the critical importance of assessing climate for students. In addition to the approaches listed, the School is encouraged to assess how the student-based recruiting efforts have achieved success (as noted in the 98-2003 report) in order to ensure continued success. *RESPONSE: This recommendation fits well with our interest in tracking the impact of our publications and other marketing and recruiting activities.*
- ❖ It is hoped that all supervisors will follow the recommendation of providing opportunities for diversity awareness and skills training and advancement opportunities and will include commitment to diversity as part of employee evaluation. *RESPONSE: Contribution to community is part of both faculty and staff evaluation processes.*

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ It appears that multidimensional avenues have been identified to recruit a diverse student body; recruitment centers in addition to the Philadelphia Center could be utilized. *RESPONSE: Partnerships with the other centers will be explored.*
- ❖ There is little in terms of discussion or strategies for retention and sustaining the diversity gained through recruitment efforts. Mentoring, D-Net, and efforts to create a climate that supports open communication and interaction do enhance retention. It is recommended however, that retention efforts include proactive individual interventions in addition to group oriented activities. *RESPONSE: Although not stated, individual interventions occur as needed, both proactively and reactively.*
- ❖ Mentoring to support the academic excellence of underrepresented students is a potential best practice.
- ❖ Good use of Lion Scouts and PA Governor School, WISE and other such recruiting efforts are to be commended.

- ❖ Benchmarking with other institutions is important; it is hoped that responsibility for these efforts will extend beyond the Office of Equity and Diversity. *RESPONSE: Recommendations for others to be responsible will be solicited from the diversity committee.*

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Strengthening the partnership with the Senior Faculty Mentor will assist with national benchmarking activities and support tenure track faculty success. Mechanisms for accountability in following through with the Senior Faculty Mentor's recommendations are not apparent. The School may wish to consider augmenting the Senior Faculty Mentor's activities with a formal mentoring program within the School. *RESPONSE: Considering and following through with the recommendations of the Senior Faculty Mentor will be critical when those recommendations are received... An informal mentoring program is currently in place for faculty.*
- ❖ IST may also wish to strengthen its relationship with Office of Human Resources to utilize available services such as participation in career fairs, and the minority vita bank. *RESPONSE: These services are currently being utilized in faculty searches, as well as others.*
- ❖ Providing opportunities for professional development is an important aspect of retention. IST may wish to consider how those opportunities will be evaluated within the SRDP (staff) and how new approaches to diversity scholarship and research will be valued within the tenure and promotion process for faculty. *RESPONSE: This is interesting advice, as it begs the question as to whether professional development and scholarship (or lack thereof) with respect to diversity might be given extra weight. Certainly, neither would be less valued than other forms of development of scholarship.*

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ Review of curriculum to enhance incorporation of diversity is positive, as are efforts to bridge teaching, research and community outreach. These efforts may also have a positive impact on recruitment and retention of undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty from underrepresented groups.
- ❖ Efforts to increase international education and internship programs abroad are positive and might be complemented by domestic opportunities for international faculty.
- ❖ Collaboration with female and minority owned companies and attention to intercultural and international issues when guest speakers are chosen are potential best practices.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Encouragement and reward for participation in Commission For Women, Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equity and Commission On Racial/Ethnic Diversity reflect commitment to diversity and equity.
- ❖ Assessment of commitment to diversity on the part of candidates for faculty and staff positions is also a potential best practice. IST might consider specifically requesting a statement of the candidate's diversity experience and philosophy as part of the dossier. *RESPONSE: While we currently include such questions as part of the interview, we will explore the human resource policies around asking for a written statement.*
- ❖ Planned implementation of a School of Information Sciences and Technology Fellows Program is a potential best practice.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Creation of an Office of Equity and Diversity and appointment of the assistant dean for equity and diversity, as well as hiring an undergraduate recruiter who embraces diversity and takes that mindset into the community, demonstrate a commitment to diversity that will benefit the School. It is positive that the diversity plan encourages each unit within the School to develop and implement diversity initiatives in collaboration with the Office of Equity and Diversity rather than depending solely on that office for the School's diversity efforts.
- ❖ Corporate partnerships on diversity initiatives and prioritization of diversity in development activities are also positive actions.