

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
The College of the Liberal Arts

The College is commended for continuation of financial and administrative support for its extensive activities related to faculty and graduate student recruitment, enhancing its diversity curricular offerings and enhancing its research and scholarship in diversity related areas. The College has established a good track record in these areas. However, the plan as submitted does not address several of the *Challenges* posed by the *Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2004-2009*. It was striking to the review team that the College did not provide any metrics to measure the progress of initiatives. ***RESPONSE: Many were provided in the overview of past activities and we expect to continue to use the same kinds of metrics.*** While the review team acknowledges the College's prerogative to not have a Diversity Committee, the review team feels that the College is obligated to provide information on how the diversity agenda is forwarded within the College. The review team recommends that the College pay some attention to the areas enumerated below, especially campus climate and diversifying the staff ranks. ***RESPONSE: The College has decided to constitute a climate committee as one of its standing committees.***

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The College's efforts to focus resources on tangible initiatives are commendable and well-documented.
- ❖ The focus of the new plan on action items diminishes the importance of continuing discussions and reflections on a broader understanding of diversity. ***RESPONSE: The College will broaden its definition of diversity to include a focus on sexual orientation and disability in addition to race, gender, and ethnicity.*** While the importance of action cannot be overstated, it is also important to continually reassess the most basic notions of diversity and its implications. The Review team suggests that some mechanism for continuing discourse be included in the newest framework. See below.
- ❖ The lack of a standing diversity or climate committee is not fully addressed, and it is not clear how broader diversity issues concerning faculty and staff will be raised, vetted, and resolved. While some of these potential issues may be confronted under recruitment programs, a significant potential exists for a broader range of issues to occur. The Review Team advises an assessment of the success of the ad hoc approach, and some discussion of potential actions if the ad hoc approach is not judged to be as effective as originally thought.

RESPONSE: After examining the college-specific results of the recent faculty and staff climate survey, and in light of the suggestions in this feedback, the College will constitute a climate committee.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The continuous monitoring of salaries and status of women and minority faculty is commendable, as is the commitment to competitive counteroffers, when appropriate.
- ❖ Continued scrutiny of the search committees by the Dean is a welcome addition to the Framework.
- ❖ The enhanced research and scholarship in diversity-related areas has the potential to significantly, and positively, impact the campus climate in the long term.
- ❖ There is no explicit plan for assessing and improving the climate for staff. The College should consider a process by which staff climate issues could be addressed.

RESPONSE: The new college climate committee will have as part of its charge the addressing of staff climate issues.

- ❖ While the commitment to recruiting a diverse faculty is obvious, the commitment to assessing and maintaining a climate conducive to retention and productivity is unclear. Given the recent University-wide climate survey, the College should consider specifying how it could utilize information from the survey in identifying climate issues.

RESPONSE: This will be the first task of the new climate committee.

- ❖ The continued dependence upon individual department heads for the identification of climate issues could lead to inconsistent application of the College’s diversity ideals. The review team feels that this is an ineffective means of evaluating the climate, in that in some instances, department heads/supervisors may be the source of the climate challenges. The College should consider evaluating the effectiveness of this approach, and potential mechanisms for ensuring consistent execution of the College’s plan.

RESPONSE: The new college climate committee will be charged with creating alternative channels for the identification of climate issues.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The additional efforts to increase the number of African American and Latino graduate students appear to be focused and intended to move the College even further towards its diversity goals. The role of climate in recruitment issues is not addressed. The review team suggests including climate as a significant factor in the success of recruitment programs. *RESPONSE: The feedback raises the concern that our plan does not acknowledge that campus/community/climate and other non-salary issues may have a substantial influence on recruitment and retention. We can assure you that we are aware of the entire context in which recruitment and retention occur, though our emphasis in our report and plan was on financial rewards. We hope that the involvement of the new climate committee in these issues will ensure that a comprehensive understanding of retention issues will be addressed in college policies and procedures. We believe that our report and plan underplayed the degree to which this is currently going on in Liberal Arts, and we would offer our record of retention of minority faculty, detailed in the our report, as proof of that. Nevertheless, the Response was accurate in noting that we did not include discussion of the broader context.*
- ❖ The team notes that given the poor retention of minority students in the College, there should be more information provided on assessing the success of any proposed new plans.

RESPONSE: It is difficult for us to know how to interpret the claim of “poor retention” of minority students. University data provided by the Office for Educational Equity show that the retention and graduation rates for minority students in Liberal Arts at University Park lag behind those rates for white students. If the review committee is saying that any differential between white and minority graduation rates is a matter of concern, then we agree. With that caveat, the table below, with data from the Office of Educational Equity and the Penn State Fact Book, shows that our graduation rates exceed those of other UP colleges, with the differential being especially striking for the four-year graduation rate. Nevertheless, there is much work to be done and we are committed to doing it.

GRADUATION RATE COMPARISONS: UP ONLY

4-year graduation rates, 1998 cohort

	<i>total minority</i>	<i>white</i>
<i>UP – all colleges</i>	<i>26.8%</i>	<i>44.8%</i>
<i>UP – Liberal Arts only</i>	<i>63.0%</i>	<i>74.8%</i>

5-year graduation rates, 1997 cohort

	<i>total minority</i>	<i>white</i>
<i>UP – all colleges</i>	<i>66.5%</i>	<i>79.3%</i>
<i>UP – Liberal Arts only</i>	<i>67.4%</i>	<i>84.1%</i>

6-year graduation rates, 1996 cohort

	<i>total minority</i>	<i>white</i>
<i>UP – all colleges</i>	<i>69.4%</i>	<i>82.4%</i>

More detail should also have been provided regarding the work of our multicultural equity coordinator in the recruiting and retention of minority undergraduate students. In 2003/2004, our coordinator had over 1500 individual contacts with underrepresented undergraduate students. In addition, he personally contacted all prospective minority applicants, offered group professional development and retention workshops, and participated in the recruitment of underrepresented graduate students.

- ❖ The team questions the feasibility of the “Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, along with the Director of Multicultural Equity, and the Senior Faculty Mentor in the Graduate School devising a systematic recruitment strategy to attract outstanding minority undergraduate students to stay at Penn State and pursue graduate work in Liberal Arts.” Many review team members are aware of other Colleges that avoid this approach due to concerns regarding “promoting from within.”
RESPONSE: We do not share those concerns. We believe, especially for minority students, that the advantages of pursuing graduate work in an environment that is familiar and supportive can outweigh any disadvantages associated with doing graduate work at the same institution where one receives the baccalaureate degree.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The plan proposes to continue the combination of strategies that have proven to be effective in recruiting senior African American faculty. A goal is stated for the next five years to match the progress made in the previous five years.
- ❖ The primary retention strategy is to make competitive counter offers when outstanding faculty receive offers from other universities. However, as previously mentioned under **Challenge 2** above, there is no acknowledgement that campus/community climate and other non-salary issues may have a substantial influence on retention.
RESPONSE: We do acknowledge this obvious fact, and as you will see in our responses in Challenge 2, we are prepared to address those non-economic issues in a formal manner.
- ❖ It is not clear how the “Dean will continue to closely monitor the adherence of search committees to the college’s expectations on searches or how departments will be instructed to constitute search committees so as to enhance the likelihood of locating and recruiting excellent minority candidates”(p.12 of report). It is also unclear as to how these practices will make any difference in recruitment outcomes.
RESPONSE: The Dean will require that search committees explain why minority candidates have not been included on the “short list” for vacancies. She will continue to require search committees to inform her of how they have attempted to reach potential minority candidates. The College’s record of recruitment of minority faculty, especially African American faculty, and women testifies to the effectiveness of the processes in place. Data on this record can be found in the Plan.

- ❖ It is disturbing that the plan ignores the lack of diversity in the staff ranks and makes no attempt to address this issue.

RESPONSE: The College takes very seriously this criticism and has examined its procedures in light of it. Over the past year, the College has filled 37 staff positions. Only four of those appointments came from outside of the university, slightly more than a quarter came from inside the college. Given the rules of the internal bidding system, it is hard to envision coming up with “a plan for the recruitment of staff from underrepresented groups” from within the university. Having said that, however, it is clear that minority bidders are not being placed in Liberal Arts. For the 37 positions open last year, we had 132 bids from minorities. Only six minority candidates were interviewed and none was hired. One contributing factor might be that we are prohibited from sharing information about the race of applicants for staff positions with search committees. We have approached the Office of Human Resources to determine how we may legally alert search committees to the presence of minority candidates in the lists of bidders. Our performance in the past has been unsatisfactory and will require a rethinking of how we conduct staff searches.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ It is commendable that the College will continue providing financial and administrative support to continue enhancing its multitudinous diversity curricular offerings and to add new academic minors and degrees.
- ❖ It is commendable that the College will continue providing financial and administrative support to continue enhancing research and scholarship in diversity related areas.
- ❖ Timetables and processes for the implementation of the new programs should be added.
RESPONSE: This is not entirely possible because the timing depends on a number of factors, including faculty time and commitment, curricular affairs processes, and resources. Here is the status of the initiatives listed in our plan:

1. The B.S. in African and African American Studies with options in African Studies and Law and Social Justice, will be available to students in the spring of 2005.

2. The time frame for the College’s goal to increase the already large number of Liberal Arts courses that meet the university’s new American Diversity requirement by 10% is already stated in the plan as 2009.

3. The minor in Gender, Sexuality, and Identity in collaboration with the College of Health and Human Development is currently being developed by a faculty committee. Their goal is to initiate the curricular affairs process in the fall of 2004 with the intention that the minor will be available in fall 2005.

4. Curricular expansion of the Latino(a) Studies offerings is underway. Three new courses have gone on the books in the past two years: English 226 (Latina(o) Border Theories; English 426 (Chicano(o) Cultural Production); SPAN/AAAS 132 (Afro-Hispanic Civilization). These courses will be part of a minor that will hopefully be put through the curricular affairs process this fall and be available in fall of 2005. Jan Juffer and Ralph Rodriguez, assistant professors of English, are the lead developers on the minor.

5. *Planning for a graduate concentration in Disability Studies is underway as part of a collaboration between the Department of English and the Rock Ethics Center. The goal is to have the program in the curricular affairs process by the end of spring, 2005. An undergraduate minor will be developed after that. Professors Michael Berube and Janet Lyons, of the English Department, and Nancy Tuana, of the Philosophy Department, are leading this effort. A philosophy course on ethics and disability will go to curricular affairs this fall.*

6. *We hope that the development of dual title master's and doctoral degrees by African and African American Studies will be completed during the next three year strategic planning cycle.*

7. *The College and the University Office for Educational Equity have already agreed to provide the financial support and infrastructure support necessary to continue the Race Relations Project in the future. In addition to financial support, Liberal Arts will provide the project with office space, equipment, and budget management.*

- ❖ The review team notes that it is unclear how diversity is infused into the broader curriculum of the College, e.g. in those courses that are not multicultural in nature.

RESPONSE: On page 10 of our final report on the 1998-2003 framework, we believe that we answered this question in depth. There is a large and increasing quotient of diversity in a substantial number of our courses at every level. This is happening in a natural way because of the changing pedagogy, methodology, and foci of our disciplines. If the Review Committee is suggesting that the central administration of the College intervene in the process of determining the content

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The plan does not address this challenge.

RESPONSE: We did address this issue in our final report on the 1998-2003 Framework, but not in our plan. There are currently one minority department head, two female department heads, and one female interim department head in the College. The coordinator of multi-cultural equity is an African American. In addition, all of the highly graded staff positions in the College, including the director of administrative Services, the director of computer support services, the assistant dean for resident instruction, the coordinator or advising services, the director of development, the coordinator of outreach, and the facilities coordinator are women. We would welcome advice on programs in other colleges at Penn State and elsewhere that directly address this issue.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The plan does not address this challenge.

RESPONSE: We intend to establish a standing climate committee. Other than that, we have no plans at the present time to make organizational changes that directly relate to our diversity goals.