

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
Schreyer Honors College

The Schreyer Honors College's 2004-2009 plan, put together with input from a wide range of stakeholders, shows the College's renewed commitment to "failing forward" by gaining from past experiences and enhancing its planning. The creation of a chart that includes strategic objectives, baselines, targets, and responsibilities demonstrates the College's commitment to implement the 2004-2009 diversity strategic plan. The chart and overall plan would benefit from specific target dates and metrics for accomplishing and measuring success in achieving the College's diversity goals and objectives.

RESPONSE: The SHC diversity plan is interwoven throughout the college's strategic plan. The Schreyer Honors College Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2004-2009 document was completed immediately before the AD-14 review of the dean's office and approximately six months prior to a college-wide strategic planning cycle initiated in the summer of 2004. The detailed process of collecting baseline data, establishing appropriate improvement criteria, and establishing target achievement for a five-year term must precede the development of target dates and detailed metrics for the diversity plan. Feedback from the AD-14 review will also be incorporated into the overall plan. In short, the comment is well taken and we are currently working on the issue (strategic plans are due February 2005).

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The College is commended for planning to continue to reference its understanding of diversity in official communications.
- ❖ Expanding diversity training for all staff is a positive step toward communicating a shared understanding of diversity throughout the College. The chart included in the plan specifies how this will be accomplished. Including mechanisms for assessing the degree to which staff understand the College's definition, strategies to achieve inclusiveness, and University-wide initiatives would strengthen the implementation plan.
- ❖ It is clear that the College has ensured that the diversity committee membership is representative of the College's administrators, staff, and students. If possible, the College may also want to consider adding faculty representation.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The College's signature course models have potential for becoming a best practice. While these courses are designed to raise awareness of diversity issues and demonstrate the College's support of diversity in the curriculum, there is no evidence that they address, or improve climate concerns.
- ❖ The College's plan to receive systematic feedback will help the College to better identify climate issues.
- ❖ The plan for this Challenge focuses exclusively on students. It is not clear how the College will assess and respond to the climate concerns of staff.

RESPONSE: We are in the process of recruiting new (and diverse) faculty members for both our Faculty Advisory Committee and our Diversity Committee. The strategic planning process will identify suitable indicators or metrics as mentioned above. The SHC will also develop and implement Honors course assessments in the next two years which can address, in part, the impact of the SHC signature courses. It is important to point out that the SHC does not control the curricula, but rather uses its influence on faculty, departments and colleges to develop various courses. It is beyond our scope to expect that these courses would change any academic college or Penn State per se, but they can/should be transformative for the course participants. In that sense, such change may positively influence the general climate, but our outcomes will be limited to individual assessments. The SHC will also implement more systematic and in-depth evaluations of our exiting seniors and alumni; questions about climate issues will be included.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The College's continued collaboration in recruiting efforts is laudable. Seeking the help of alumni admissions volunteers is a new and proactive strategy to further these efforts.
- ❖ The College is commended for its efforts to identify faculty that teach courses with a diversity, multicultural, or international focus in an effort to publicize such courses for the benefit of scholars. However, it is not clear how this initiative would successfully contribute to recruiting and retaining underrepresented students.
- ❖ It is not clear how the College plans to measure its success in recruitment or retention of underrepresented students.

RESPONSE: Recruitment of under-represented students to the SHC is an ongoing challenge. The SHC is seeking to strengthen partnerships with Dr. Jones' office and the Bunton-Waller program as well as Residence Life in 2004-05. Ideas will be sought from these and other offices to determine how to increase the attractiveness of the SHC and PSU in an increasingly competitive climate that relies more on financial assistance than any other single factor. We recommend that a committee be formed comprised of representatives from all units who have scholarships or other minority students. The committee can plan and coordinate comprehensive offer packages that may yield more under-represented students to Penn State in the future.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The College's mission and vision clearly encourage respect for intellectual diversity, a positive step toward attracting a diverse workforce.
- ❖ Targeting diverse candidates by posting job announcements in appropriate listservs and newspapers is an effective way of advertising open positions. The Review Team encourages the College to explore additional venues for identifying and locating diverse candidates.
- ❖ The College is commended for its plan to implement strategies that more actively recruit diverse staff from underrepresented groups. The College is encouraged to develop a complimentary plan to assist in retaining and promoting these staff members.

RESPONSE: Recruitment of diverse staff is not seen as problematic in the SHC given the few position openings in any given year as well as the record of success we have had in the past. The most important strategy used to retain under-represented minority staff is release time to work on courses and advanced degrees. In addition, all staff receive mentorship within the SHC and are encouraged to participate in larger Penn State mentorship programs as well. Professional development (including domestic and international travel) is strongly encouraged in the SHC. Approximately 1/2 of the staff are pursuing graduate degrees; approximately one-third participate in various commissions and and/or other support groups.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The SHC will continue to promote and expand its partnerships with academic units and to promote study abroad opportunities. Appendix A includes several strategies related to Challenge 5, but few of them include specific metrics.

RESPONSE: As noted, the SHC is using a variety of strategies to assist faculty, departments and colleges in developing, enhancing, and implementing curricula and undergraduate research that fosters intercultural and international competencies. Indeed, among Honors programs/colleges and certainly within the CIC, the SHC is viewed as a national leader in this realm. Further assessments of honors courses will be developed as noted above.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The SHC proposes to continue the staff development activities as previously reported.
- ❖ Appendix A lists these activities, but provides no metrics related to how these activities would be evaluated.
- ❖ The proposal in the narrative to “actively try to diversity the FAC as well as its EAB” was not included in Appendix A.

RESPONSE: The strategic plan will elaborate on programs and assessment, but it is also important to recognize that much of what the SHC does is "behind the scenes" and qualitative in nature. Thus, "continue to work with" various partners is important. However, it would be inappropriate to set goals for other units for outcomes that the SHC has no control over. Rather, we can inspire, motivate, encourage, enhance, recognize, and otherwise promote such activities in other units. The leadership of the SHC is diverse (1/2 are Mexican-American; 2/2 are women) and 4/13 are official mentors in various PSU mentorship programs meant to develop women and under-represented minorities in leadership and other positions.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The plan uses phrases like, “will continue to develop,” “will continue to support,” “will work with,” etc. without providing details or metrics by which these activities could be evaluated.

CONCLUSION

The SHC takes diversity very seriously and addresses it at student, staff, programming, residential and curricular levels, often in partnership with other units across campus. Efforts will become more streamlined and focused in the future.