

Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09
Eberly College of Science
Mid-Term Progress Report
Spring 2007

The Eberly College of Science (ECOS) makes diversity a strategic priority in its community building goal. The multicultural coordinator position has been elevated to ensure that diversity planning is considered in administrative decisions. Diversity efforts seem to be infused throughout the College; diversity initiatives are noted on the College's Web site, and every unit has a climate and diversity committee. The College has implemented many recruitment and retention initiatives for a number of years, but it is unclear how productive each has been. The Review Team challenges the College to increase the effectiveness of its recruitment and retention efforts, particularly for underrepresented graduate students, faculty, and staff. It does not appear that overall changes have been made to include diversity topics throughout the curriculum, though the review team acknowledges that in scientific disciplines, creativity is often more necessary to achieve desired outcomes. Finally, it is difficult to assess effectiveness of some initiatives noted in the update because conclusions are stated without basis and at times there are no evaluative data provided.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ It is unknown what specific metrics, if any, are used to determine how effective the College has been in its efforts toward developing a shared and inclusive understanding of diversity.
- ❖ Potential Best Practice: development of a College climate and diversity brochure that is mailed annually to all students, faculty and staff.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ There is a College committee on diversity and climate, as well as department committees. While a list of accomplishments (though many undated) of the College committee is given; department committee accomplishments would strengthen reporting.
- ❖ While it is asserted that one of this year's objectives for the Climate and Diversity committee involves issues relating to the LGBT community, no information is given concerning what the objectives or issues are. Reporting descriptive and numerical data about initiatives vis-à-vis this population is essential for a full assessment of College efforts toward this Challenge.
- ❖ Persons with disabilities are not mentioned in the update. Specific attention to, and reporting about, this population is recommended.
- ❖ The College is strongly encouraged to follow through with its plans to conduct the planned climate survey as soon as possible.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Female undergraduate enrollment for 2005 is 48.7%; however, no enrollment figures are given by department.
- ❖ The "Undergraduate student enrollment by ethnicity" data show that there has been a small increase in enrollment numbers in each group over the previous years, but it is unclear if these are statistically significant.
- ❖ Retention rates are somewhat unclear from the data given, especially graduation rates. Clarification is needed.
- ❖ ECOS has a variety of recruitment and retention programs, and as was noted in the feedback for the 1998-2003 *Framework* final update, more specific data should be given in order to evaluate effectiveness. There is a list of most successful strategies but no evaluative information is supplied to explain on what basis these conclusions were reached. One new creative initiative which seems especially promising is permitting students to retake the first exam in the freshman so-called "weed out courses."
- ❖ The review team recommends that supporting data be gathered and assessed.
- ❖ Data on graduate student enrollment for all underrepresented students indicate that there has been a lack of progress in increasing enrollment, and that African American graduate student enrollment since 1997 has declined. Recruitment efforts are described as proactive, but no evaluation is reported to have been done. No

metrics are detailed concerning retention efforts. It would be helpful to include reporting of regular collection and analysis of recruitment and retention data for effective assessment of progress in this area.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ A significant increase is reported in recruitment of women faculty; they are 40% of assistant professors and 17% within all academic ranks. Data by department are not supplied, though it is reported that those departments with less success are being helped. The inclusion of gender data by ethnicity would be beneficial.
- ❖ The College's minority faculty numbers are low. Unlike for female faculty, there is no enumerated goal.
- ❖ The College acknowledged that it has not been effective in community building among its faculty of color, and no future plans to address this were mentioned. Development of a plan is recommended.
- ❖ Staff members from underrepresented groups in the College are reported to be 4%, many in research support or IT positions, but no staff assistants, the most numerous positions. A few strategies were noted for staff recruitment, but it is unclear if they have been implemented and if so, with what result. It is suggested that the College investigate other strategies such as the recently developed OHR "Hire Power" program.
- ❖ The Review Team noted that significant portions of the update in this Challenge were copied from the previous report. It is strongly encouraged that greater emphasis be placed on new material in future reporting.
- ❖ A potential best practice is the College's annual assessment of the promotion and tenure process to detect flaws and biases; it is unknown what changes, if any, were instituted as a result of this process.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ The College is commended for requiring its first-year seminar students to participate in the Race Relations Project. Collaboration with the Africana Center, the College of the Liberal Arts and the Office of the Vice Provost for Education Equity on weeklong activities for Martin Luther King week is also noteworthy.
- ❖ In survey courses with non-technical emphasis, inclusion of contributions of other cultures and nations to the development of the field has increased, though American women and minorities are not mentioned. Details regarding this initiative would strengthen future reporting.
- ❖ It is recognized, as was noted in previous *Framework* feedback, that "pure science does not per se study culture." The College was at that time challenged to use this notion to be more creative. For instance, an example involved discussions throughout the curriculum of the types of problems scientists choose to investigate which often have ethical and cultural implications. No follow-up to this suggestion for creativity seems to have occurred. It also appears that there is still no college-wide strategy for integrating diversity into the core curriculum. The Review Team strongly suggests that the College aggressively pursue these goals.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ It is positive that there is now a strategic leadership group comprised of the Dean, Associate Deans and the Executive Assistant to the Dean/Director of Science Diversity Initiatives. Ten out of eleven administrators, however, are men, eight of whom are white, two are Asian American and the one female administrator is white. This is an area where improvement is needed.
- ❖ The College has developed a list of females and minorities whom it believes have the potential and inclination to assume leadership positions and gives them opportunities to hone their leadership skills; this method has met with limited success. The College is encouraged to rethink its strategies for diversifying management.
- ❖ Potential best practice: upgrading the multicultural coordinator position to Executive Assistant to the Dean/Director of Science Diversity Initiatives, reporting to the Dean, with membership in the ECOS Executive Committee.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ A positive cultural change is reported in faculty hiring, with an accepted commitment to recruiting females and members of diverse racial/ethnic groups without the previously voiced concerns about maintaining academic excellence. The College is commended for fostering this important cultural shift.

- ❖ The College had planned to identify a diversity recruitment coordinator in each department for graduate student recruitment, but this is said not to have occurred to the desired extent. It is unclear what follow-through has occurred, if any, with this proposal.