

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

A stated goal of the College of Engineering is becoming one of the country's top ten engineering programs among research universities "with respect to diversity." To this end, the College has developed some systematic plans with continuing refinement of initiatives. The formal commitment to use empirical data in evaluating the College's success and to rely on a variety of data sources (e.g., national databases, climate assessments, and input from various stakeholders, including alumni), is a potential best practice. The College has also embarked on an important, highly-visible effort to "internationalize" the curriculum, which is consistent with the College's goal to create "world-class engineers." Overall, the College has provided a very thorough update, including frank acknowledgment of specific areas that require attention—most notably in the area of recruiting students and staff from underrepresented/underserved groups.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

***Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity***

- ❖ The team notes that the College's diversity statement is prominent on its Web site and includes components central to the *Framework*. While there appears to be a good faith effort in the update to respond to previous feedback by highlighting the 1993 vision statement and the strategic issues concerning climate and inclusivity, it is not clear if this is intended to be the diversity definition. ***RESPONSE: The statement of diversity adopted by the faculty in 2005 is included in print and online publications. This Diversity Statement which includes the diversity definition can be found at <http://www.engr.psu.edu/Terms/diversity.asp>.***
- ❖ The College disseminates information about diversity initiatives and issues well.
- ❖ The Diversity Committee's role in developing this update is a potential best practice.

***Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate***

- ❖ While use of climate surveys is encouraged, it is not apparent that any new initiatives have been implemented to address survey results; a more coordinated plan for climate assessment is needed.
- ❖ Contextual data are insufficient; it is difficult to determine if the 28% of students, 20% of faculty, and 18% of staff that did *not* find the environment welcoming are from targeted groups. In addition, separating survey responses by targeted groups would help to determine if a problematic environment exists (e.g., historical "chilly climate" for women). The College is encouraged to place highest priority on its plans to expand data collection and reporting, (e.g., senior exit surveys, focus groups, and revamping of climate surveys).
- ❖ Combining the Multicultural Engineering Program (MEP) and the Women in Engineering Program (WEP) to create the well-staffed Office of Engineering Diversity is a strong approach in support of diversity.
- ❖ The update outlines expanded support to the LGBT community (especially the recently begun oSTEM organization), though it is unclear how this support is extended to faculty and staff.
- ❖ Providing office space for student organizations is a best practice.

**Representation (Access and Success)**

***Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body***

- ❖ Enrollment of women and other underrepresented students has recently decreased. The update does not appear to directly address why this may have occurred, and possible remedies are needed.
- ❖ While the statistics and graphs are helpful, presentation of data separating women from men for each underrepresented group may help the College better understand the issues for each group, provided that population sizes are sufficiently large.

- ❖ Although an inference can be made that Asian American students are omitted from discussion because they are not underrepresented in the College or the profession, this exclusion is a concern as these groups may be underserved and thus still need support.  
*RESPONSE: The Office of Engineering Diversity is aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of Asian-American students. And, although not identified specifically in this report Asian-American students are recruited to participate in the EMIX (internship) program and receive support for travel grants. Other services (tutoring, courses, etc.) available through the Diversity Office are inclusive for participation by all engineering students.*
- ❖ Continuing partnerships with HBCUs and HSIs are commendable.
- ❖ Information regarding supportive programs for persons with disabilities falls surprisingly short.

#### ***Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce***

- ❖ Although Penn State programs to address diversity in the workforce are mentioned (e.g., Staff Assistant Program, Professional Entry Program, and Diversity Talent Bank), no specific plan to address this Challenge is discussed. While Big Ten schools and national data are consistently used for comparison purposes, the College relies on other colleges at University Park, other rural PA institutions of higher education, and State System of Higher Education schools as benchmarks when staffing data fell short. Perhaps the College could consider setting staffing goals to exceed the appropriate identified benchmarks.
- ❖ It appears that the College has focused on women and employees from diverse ethnic/racial groups for most of its initiatives, though leadership development opportunities appear to be offered only to women.

#### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- ❖ International opportunities for faculty and students are commendable, especially the creation of the International Engineering certificate. However, these opportunities appear to be ad hoc offerings; a coherent plan for embedding globalization is suggested.
- ❖ Other than international perspectives, efforts to integrate diversity into the curriculum seem limited. The College's curricular offerings are designed to "attract a diverse enrollment," but it is unclear whether or not diversity values have been incorporated in a systematic manner.
- ❖ Faculty and graduate students are said to receive diversity training through workshops and videotapes; how successful have such efforts have been?
- ❖ The College provides "courses with gender-balanced enrollments" and courses "clustered for ethnic minority students." Information regarding the scope and effectiveness of this approach would be helpful.

#### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

##### ***Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management***

- ❖ Information regarding endowed professorships and chairs does not differentiate women from other targeted groups, making it difficult to determine the current status of these other groups.
- ❖ The College is commended for adding several women faculty members and academic administrators as well as three faculty members from underrepresented groups and a woman of color as the newly appointed assistant dean for engineering diversity. It would be helpful to include rank and tenure-status of the faculty hires.
- ❖ The Council of Senior Faculty Women provides valuable professional development services for women faculty. The College is encouraged to expand this program to other targeted groups.
- ❖ The scope of departmental resources and programs for leadership identification and development is unclear.
- ❖ The College requests a diversity/professional leadership philosophy statement from prospective department heads. Extending this request to a requirement of all departments and to all faculty positions as well would constitute a potential best practice.

***Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals***

- ❖ The creation of the Office of Engineering Diversity is a very positive step.
- ❖ Plans for future actions related to this Challenge are positive, but relatively general. Increases in budget commitments for professional development of staff, administrators, and faculty would enhance this portion of the update.