

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

The College takes seriously the need to educate teachers to not only teach diverse audiences but to incorporate diversity issues in the classroom as demonstrated by the wide range of graduate level courses with diversity content and plans to expand field experiences.

An analysis of historical enrollment patterns by content area as well as benchmarking would be useful. Overall, changes in enrollment patterns on both the undergraduate and graduate level should be analyzed.

It is commendable that the College has identified metrics to track progress. Information on responsible parties and timeframes should be included for action items in the plan. The College does appear to be data-oriented, with the collection of climate data and initiatives planned in response to the results.

Response: We are in the process of establishing this timetable and identifying the responsible parties.

The Review Team notes that the structure of the plan makes evaluation somewhat difficult. Rather than being a stand-alone document, the plan relies heavily on the reader's familiarity with the College's final report of implementing the 98-03 *Framework*.

Response: We were trying to minimize redundancy across the two reports.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The College broadened its definition of diversity following the midpoint of the 98-03 *Framework* and will continue to use this more inclusive definition to guide its diversity efforts. There was no mention of including the definition in College communications pieces.

Response: We will be incorporating the broader definition in future College communications pieces.

- ❖ An additional communications method has been identified to provide information about both the University and College's initiatives in the form of an internal home page; this, with the continuing use of *Mosaic* and the listservs, should enhance the sharing of information.
- ❖ The structure of the standing Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee will expand to include representation of senior faculty. It would be helpful to know the current structure.

*Response: To clarify what may have not been clear in our report: The existing Committee already includes senior faculty members. Indeed, the lead member of the leadership team has been a senior faculty member from the inception of the Committee. We do hope to expand the involvement of the senior faculty in the future work of the Committee. Also, regarding the structure of the Committee: The Committee has one faculty, staff, and student representative from each of the five Departments in the College (3 * 5 = 15 Department representatives.). In addition, there are several additional members such as the Director of Multicultural Student Services and one of the Associate Deans in the College. The leadership team for the Committee includes three members: a faculty member, a staff member, and a student member.*

- ❖ It is positive that the College plans to continue supporting the American Indian Leadership Program and the Penn State Educational Partnership Program.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ Initiatives have been established in response to the results of the recent climate survey and more are planned. Each department will be encouraged to consider creating an entity to be attentive to climate issues at the department level. Climate results will be used to tailor future professional development opportunities.
- ❖ Outreach into the State College Area School District is commendable.
- ❖ The College is considering the creation of an online mechanism for collecting concerns about climate; additional alternative forms of collecting data should be explored.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Current recruiting initiatives for undergraduate students will be supplemented by working with high schools to establish Future Teacher Clubs; by working with alumni; and by maintaining and increasing the College's participation in urban schools' college fairs. Plans will utilize current students from underrepresented groups as recruiters; the College may want to explore the Lion Scout program. Information about gender balance in recruiting and the student body profile would be helpful.
- ❖ The College's initiative to explore collaboration with the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences for a partnership with its summer science camps is promising and should be pursued.
- ❖ In the update, the College reported that from 1997 to 2002 the percentage of undergraduate women rose by three percentage points while the enrollment of undergraduate students from underrepresented groups has been inconsistent. It would be useful to consider what may have impacted both of these trends and develop initiatives in response.
- ❖ Retention efforts for undergraduates out of the Office of Multicultural Student Services (MSS) will expand to include peer mentoring, free tutoring and supplemental instruction sessions, and study skills sessions that support course requirements specific to teacher education.
- ❖ The Review Team recommends working to reduce intergroup disparity in graduation rates.
- ❖ The percentages of graduate students from various underrepresented groups have shifted slightly over time and, as the College indicates, the declines warrant further attention. Graduate student recruitment has been successful using the partnerships with several HBCUs and HSIs. The Office of Multicultural Student Services will continue to collaborate with other College directors and the Office of Graduate Educational Equity.
- ❖ The location of the Humphrey Fellows program in the College is a promising new graduate student recruitment technique as is the development of an alumni network.
- ❖ Graduate student retention efforts should include increased attention to clear communication about expectations, guidance and support for teaching assistants, and careful mentoring.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The College is encouraged to expand its initiatives aimed at recruiting women faculty and faculty from underrepresented groups.
- ❖ The College is encouraged to include diversity as a criterion in the search processes.
Response: The College has been including and will continue to include diversity as a criterion in the search process.
- ❖ Although the College states that it has a relatively stable staff in place, which limits its ability to make significant changes, some outline of a recruiting plan should be in place.
- ❖ Consideration should be given to evaluating diversity scholarship without prejudgments regarding the value of topics or approaches. The College may wish to consider acknowledging and appropriately valuing the contributions to diversity in the context of service within the tenure and promotion process and in staff reviews.
- ❖ The College is encouraged to give careful attention to creating diversity-related professional development plans for all members of the College.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ Three efforts have been identified: add specialized courses that explicitly address diversity issues; infuse diversity issues into courses dealing broadly with teaching and learning issues; and help faculty members become more sensitive to their strengths and weaknesses in addressing diversity issues.
- ❖ It is positive that the College's Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee's charge has been expanded to strengthen the treatment of diversity issues in the curriculum.
- ❖ The number and range of urban and international field placements will be expanded.

- ❖ The College may consider exploring teaching and research opportunities in collaboration with the Africana Research Center.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The College states that it will continue to encourage faculty and staff from underrepresented groups to pursue leadership development. No new initiatives were identified for this Challenge.
- ❖ The Review Team suggests that professional development opportunities related to diversity be explored for all staff.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ No plans for significant organizational change are noted.
- ❖ The Office of Multicultural Student Services is considered to be successful in its initiatives.
- ❖ The College is encouraged to consider an examination of the integration of the diversity strategic plan with the College's general strategic plan to identify areas for needed change.