

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-2009
University Libraries

The University Libraries diversity strategic plan includes funding for activities such as diversity-related research and networking opportunities to explore initiatives related to diversity and climate at several levels. Networking will include exchanges within the unit; across the University; and with external consortia such as the Committee on Institutional Cooperation and the Association of Research Libraries. However, Libraries does not specify how these actions will be accomplished, who will be accountable for implementation, or how success will be measured. Absent from the strategic plan are outreach efforts the Libraries might initiate to impact the understanding of diversity at locations throughout the Commonwealth. It is recommended that the University Libraries create a standing position for a diversity coordinator reporting to the dean to support and coordinate the unit's diversity plans. Information on implementation; timeframes, assessment measures, and accountability should be included for action items in the plan.

RESPONSE: The level of detail requested here is normally found in a tactical plan. Please see the February 2004 Framework Update for an example of the level of detail that will be supplied in future tactical plans.

The Libraries continues to conduct all programs and initiatives documented in the 1998-2003 Framework and updates. This new plan outlines additional initiatives and improvement to existing endeavors that will be carried forward in the 2004-2009 plan. Future reporting will continue to include data regarding diversity recruitment, retention, collections, teaching, outreach, mentoring, leadership, and programming.

The Libraries' administration and the Libraries' Diversity Committee do not agree with the recommendation for a diversity coordinator. Administrators are held accountable for integrating diversity in overall programs, which is preferable. (See pg. 9 of the final report for 1998-2003.)

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ It would be valuable to detail the nature and frequency of speakers and programs Libraries intends to sponsor. Many of these efforts could become part of the already initiated diversity Web site.
RESPONSE: Committees oversee these programs on an annual basis and do publicity closer to the time of the event.
- ❖ It is positive that University Libraries is requesting standardized diversity reports from all locations to compare on the same scale; however, the specifics of these diversity reports are unclear. It is recommended that these reports include information on the recruitment and retention of diverse staff, the development of diverse collections and teaching/outreach activities, mentoring, and efforts to diversify leadership. These reports should take into account the nuances of each location.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ It is positive that University Libraries plans to revise and repeat a climate assessment in 2006. Plans are also in place to utilize focus groups and other mechanisms to continue to explore unresolved issues from the last survey and new issues as they arise.
- ❖ Libraries may want to consider forming regional diversity committees to examine the diversity issues and needs at a regional campus level.
RESPONSE: The Libraries' Diversity Committee includes members from several campus locations. In addition, campus library employees will continue to be involved with diversity committees and diversity-related initiatives at their campus locations.
- ❖ Continued efforts to publicize new diversity collections, meeting places, and forums are important.
- ❖ Libraries is encouraged to consider assessing factors such as safety and library hours to better meet the needs of all patrons.
RESPONSE: The Libraries will continue its regular practice of assessing hours and patron safety each academic term.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ University Libraries outlines several promising ideas to recruit and retain students through outreach efforts. More information on implementation, responsible parties, assessment measures, and accountability would be helpful.

RESPONSE: The data on how centralized hiring has impacted diversity of student staff was included in "Appendix VII: Libraries' Demographic Data 1999-2001, All Locations," from The University Libraries Diversity Framework Update, December 14, 2001. The Libraries will continue programs initiated during the previous strategic plan as described in the 1998-2003 Framework documents.

- ❖ It is positive that Libraries is expanding existing orientation programs and resources for returning adult students and international students to include similar programs for other groups of diverse students (e.g., LGBT community, etc.).

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The University Libraries' plan to collaborate with the Office of Human Resources to enhance the diversity of applicant pools is positive.
- ❖ University Libraries understands the need to develop and implement mentoring programs and is looking at the possibility of a residency program for diverse candidates entering the profession nationally.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ❖ Plans to conduct and report an examination of the adequacy of funding for the development of diversity collections are positive. The initiative to extend start up funds, in collaboration with academic units, for faculty who wish to develop diversity collections is positive and should be pursued. Libraries may also consider utilizing special diversity collections as traveling exhibits for all library locations.

RESPONSE: The Libraries is continuing its initiative to extend funds for collections supporting diversity. The Libraries' Diversity Committee is examining both traditional and digital methods for delivering traveling diversity exhibits at all library locations.

- ❖ It is positive that University Libraries is considering offering funding for diversity related research. More information would be helpful.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ University Libraries encourages administrators and those in leadership roles to mentor and to attend programming. These efforts should be considered in the tenure and promotion process for faculty and the annual review process for staff.

RESPONSE: The Libraries continues to consider these efforts in the tenure and promotion process for faculty and in the annual review process for staff. One of the headings in the current P&T template requests faculty to show a record of their contributions to the University's programs to enhance equal opportunity and cultural diversity. Similarly, the SRDP template used for staff annual review uses 'support for diversity' as one of the performance factors. These are supported by evidence of involvement/contribution to the Libraries diversity effort, such as attendance and participation in various programming and activities, including planning of such programs and activities.

- ❖ Substantial efforts at mentoring and recruiting are required to expand the number of individuals from diverse racial/ethnic groups in leadership positions. More details are needed to describe how this will occur.

RESPONSE: The Libraries recruitment drive will continue targeting audiences of diverse racial/ethnic groups. Information brochures on open positions will continue to be distributed at the "Diversity in Academic Libraries" Conferences, and ALA (American Library Association) Conferences, Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee meetings, and other avenues. Once employees are hired, they will participate in the mentoring program. Results will be dependent on openings in leadership positions.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The commitment to secure stable and ongoing funding for diversity initiatives and positions that support diversity is positive. More information on the alternative funding sources being explored would be helpful.
RESPONSE: Funding for positions comes from base budget and special funds from the Provost. Special initiatives are funded through private giving.
- ❖ University Libraries plans to standardize diversity reporting across all locations. More information on implementation would be helpful.
RESPONSE: The Libraries will continue to employ and improve the standardized reporting mechanisms described and used in the February 2004 Framework Update.
- ❖ Libraries is encouraged to consider creating a diversity coordinator position to oversee and coordinate these efforts.
RESPONSE: At present, the Libraries Diversity Committee, reporting directly to the Dean, coordinates diversity efforts. Diversity activities are integrated into overall library activities, with line administrators accountable. (See pg. 9 of 1998-2003 final report.) This model was recognized as a best practice in Challenge 7 of the "Feedback on Progress Implementing the Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 1998-2003, University Libraries Final Report. The Committee's makeup is very diverse and allows broad input on various diversity issues.
- ❖ Continued emphasis on making library resources and collections available to diverse patrons through technology improvements and enhanced Web services is positive.