

**Feedback on A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010–15 and
2014–15 through 2018–19 Diversity Initiatives**
Fall 2014
Division of Development and Alumni Relations

The Division of Development and Alumni Relations provided an informative Appendix to update their 2010–15 *Framework* unit diversity strategic plan. While the review team was pleased to see this response to unit planning for 2010–15, the integration of ongoing efforts based on past planning into strategies for the new planning cycle is an opportunity for growth. The 2014/15–2018/19 overall strategic plan included *Framework* Challenge 4, attracting, developing, and retaining a talented and diverse workforce. This priority is addressed with strategies, measures, actions, leadership accountability, and a timeframe. This type of planning demonstrates support for diversity, equity, and inclusion and should be replicated for the six remaining *Framework* Challenges.

Although the Appendix update, with its follow-up on the 2010–15 unit plan, is an area of strength, the fairly high number of “ongoing” status listings and the lack of measures to appraise progress are areas of concern. Outcomes with measurable results and timelines would reveal improvements over time. The document notably focuses on successes surrounding fund raising, which yields high University impact. The review team values the division’s potential diversity impact and scope at all levels with a footprint that, in addition to student scholarships, provides direct support for diversity initiatives, and through its alumni reach, which spans the globe, can leverage its expansive constituencies towards the University’s diversity goals. With this much influence and power, a thoughtful, integrated, and collaborative approach to diversity, beginning with a broad definition, could have enormous positive implications for the University.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- As no definition of diversity was provided, consider beginning with this Challenge and build upon it to guide the planning process. ***RESPONSE: The definition of diversity has been revised and has been included in the updated strategic planning document. The definition is: “Diversity is a concept whereby individuals are recognized, accepted, valued, and embraced for their humanity and unique characteristics. These characteristics include, but are not limited to: age, condition of physical and mental ability, educational background, ethnicity, gender, geographic origin, marital status, parental status, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic condition, work experience, and cultural, political, and spiritual belief, practice, and tradition.***

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- The division’s proactive engagement with constituents to deal with University crises and concerns is commendable.
- Increasing the number of employees completing diversity training for four hours from 65 percent to 70 percent using the SRDP measure is a good start. A next step would be to evaluate how the increased number of program participants has affected climate. ***RESPONSE: DDAR will utilize the PMW’s to determine a metric for diversity training/hours for measurement purposes to determine increased participation. The DDAR Diversity Committee has agreed to conduct a baseline survey and subsequent surveys during the next five years in order to evaluate how the increased participation has affected climate. The DDAR Diversity Committee will also participate in our New Employee Orientation program; will make the Diversity Brown Bag lectures and movies available at our Bristol and Research Park locations; and will provide better advanced meeting notices for diversity events in order to allow for better planning to attend these events/activities.***
- Cross-promoting events through Launchpad shows promise.
- Engaging alumni to share insights on and experiences with diversity is an excellent idea. Follow-up assessment can help determine efficacy. ***RESPONSE: One method that DDAR will use to share insights is to conduct a series of interviews with our alumni and post these stories on Launchpad3, our DDAR***

intranet site. We will also post stories from other campus units as well that further provide insight on their Penn State experiences. (We currently do this with sustainability stories.).

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- Raising \$135 million, \$35 million over the target amount, for Trustee scholarships to support a more socioeconomically diverse undergraduate student body is laudable.
- Potential best practice: FastStart, a mentoring program that pairs Penn State students from underrepresented/underserved groups with alumni, faculty, and staff. With additional outcomes data supporting positive results, the program might be considered a best practice. ***RESPONSE: FastStart Coordinator Lindsey Zapletal will be invited to join the DDAR Diversity Committee in order to help increase the visibility of these programs to DDAR staff. The Diversity Committee will always include a member of the Penn State Alumni Association staff whose responsibilities include PSU student involvement in order to make our staff aware of these volunteer opportunities.***

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- The division's goal to increase its percentage of diverse staff to 10 percent by 2019 is noteworthy. Providing baseline numbers and identifying a strategy in terms of breakdown of specific faculty or staff lines will be helpful. ***RESPONSE: Further reflection indicates that 10% is a "stretch goal," so we will revise the goal in our strategic plan to increase the percentage of our diverse staff to 7.5%, which represents an increase of 50% from our current number of diverse employees.***
- Hiring a full-time trainer to assess and address key professional development needs by 2017 could be a remarkable innovation if it includes a diversity focus. ***RESPONSE: The Office of University Development has hired a Director of Talent Management, which will include developing and identifying training programs for DDAR staff. These training sessions could incorporate programs with a diversity focus.***
- Broadening and enhancing the diversity committee's programming and participating in the annual CASE (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education) Diversity Recruitment Fair demonstrates thoughtful support for diversity.

Education and Scholarship

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters U.S. and International Cultural Competencies

- No information was provided. ***Response: We do not provide direct input into the development of curriculum. Naturally, the fundraising team is willing to raise funds for any special programs that the college, campus or university leadership deem appropriate in the areas that foster U.S. and International Cultural Competencies as well as any other diversity-focused initiatives.***
- The division should consider various approaches for leveraging its numerous and influential co-curricular events and standing alumni constituencies (e.g., homecoming parade, FastStart, Blue & White Society, Nittany Lion Ambassadors, and LBTE Alumni group) to effect change and interest in curriculum development. Funding opportunities also exist in areas such as endowed chairs or other positions that can support cultural competencies or study abroad.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Promoting a diverse composition of volunteer leadership teams continues to be a helpful process. Identifying key initiatives that drive progress could be useful. ***RESPONSE: DDAR is committed to recruiting a more diverse volunteer population and will increase its efforts to further develop a pipeline of potential volunteers within all levels of our volunteer leadership circles.***

- The idea of expanding the internal pipeline for leadership positions by increasing the overall diversity of the workforce has merit. The review team appreciated the plan’s inclusion of the current leadership percentages regarding underrepresented/underserved groups.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- Allocating resources for diversity initiatives is commendable.
- While a \$50,000 fund was established and an average of \$4,100 per event was spent per year, it is difficult to gauge the impact on programs that were not mentioned. ***RESPONSE: For example, there are a number of programs that offer diversity-themed programs, including “City Lights,” “Huddle with the Faculty,” and alumni institutes.***
- Increasing collaboration among individuals and units who value diversity as a strength is a worthwhile endeavor for the division.