

**Feedback on A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010–15 and
2014–15 through 2018–19 Diversity Initiatives**
Fall 2014
Information Technology Services

Diversity and inclusion are well represented in the Information Technology Services (ITS) strategic plan, as the unit clearly engages each of the Challenges. Of particular interest to the review team is the issue of bullying and the unit's approach to dealing with it. The team also appreciates the "Foster a Collaborative Culture and Community" goal within the strategic plan.

The plan does not provide much quantitative data regarding diversity within ITS. Internal as well as national benchmarking data would enhance the plan's clarity. Specific thresholds for success are not found, and longitudinal data are largely missing. These omissions make it difficult to assess the success of ITS' past endeavors. That said, the team commends the unit for following the strategic planning guidelines and attending to each of the seven Challenges as appropriate. ***RESPONSE: Agreed. Climate and Diversity (C&D) efforts have been largely managed by a volunteer committee. While the volunteers have been effective in developing programming and responding to just-in-time needs from staff, the yearly turnover in membership has not been conducive to the collection of longitudinal and related longer-term data and metrics. To remedy this, we are repositioning some staff resources within the vice provost's office to dedicate some or all of a support position to provide long-term stability and focus.***

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- Since its last plan, ITS developed a values and principles statement, which includes diversity.
- ITS administers a Climate and Diversity survey (sent to all staff) every three years, with the last reported data from 2011. It is not clear whether the survey was implemented in 2014. Additionally, no mention is made of response rates, disaggregation of data, or how the unit intends to use the results. The plan would benefit from the presence of survey data as well as information on how the data will be deployed to inform decision-making, improve climate, and augment the overall understanding of diversity within ITS. ***RESPONSE: The 2014 survey was delayed to 2015 (due to the Values and Culture survey). The 2015 survey was just completed and we are awaiting the data. The 2011 response rate was 58% (35% of which considered themselves to be in a minority category). Results are used to inform programming, policy, communications and similar efforts from among the C&D team, HR, ITSCollab, the ITS senior leadership team and other groups within ITS. In the future (concurrent with the 2015 survey), summary data and action plans will be made available online.***
- The ITS Climate and Diversity Team has been in existence for ten years, consists of staff from all departments, and meets regularly.
- Coordination between ITS Human Resources and the Climate and Diversity Team is a potential best practice.
- Encouragement from unit leadership for staff to seek membership in the President's Commissions for equity is a best practice.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ITS collaborates with units across the University in various domains of IT support to nurture the climate and improve accessibility for faculty, staff, and students.
- Goal 5 in the plan utilizes performance indicators based on responses to several of the climate survey questions. However, the questions listed do not specifically address diversity.
- ITS's anti-bullying policy appears to be a signature initiative. The team wonders if this problem was uncovered in previous climate survey results.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- As ITS is not an academic unit, its contributions toward a more diverse student body center on areas for which it delivers IT support for projects led by other units. These collaborations are constructive.
- ITS provides employment for 250 students in various demographic categories, yet no data specify the diversity within this group. Are efforts made to recruit and retain student workers from underrepresented/underserved groups?

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ITS's activities in this area appear to emphasize its support of the University's hiring tools. Its partnership with the Office of Human Resources to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the University's employment website is noted as a particularly valuable service. The plan refers to focus group discussions that uncovered "barriers" within the application process. What are these barriers? Can ITS help OHR overcome them? ***RESPONSE: Feedback was acquired provided to OHR regarding the design of the PSU.JOBS application process. Several members of ITS are now playing key roles assisting with the design of the new WorkLion HR system.***
- Despite a decrease in the amount of diversity in applicant pools, underrepresented/underserved groups within ITS have increased from 7.3% in 2005 to 12% in 2013. This advance is laudable, but the team encourages ITS to develop specific strategies to recruit a diverse workforce and to work proactively to expand the size of its applicant pools. ***RESPONSE: ITS is now advertising all jobs nationally, however early results have been marginal. Discussions are underway to update the materials used to describe working for IT at Penn State, with a focus on resources and opportunities beyond employment. Additionally, renewed discussions are taking place about the former PDP program (a 20-year program that brought in approx. 50 employees from minority/diverse populations).***
- Women are traditionally underrepresented within the IT sector. Does ITS have any programs explicitly designed to recruit females into the workforce? ***RESPONSE: ITS has started a focus group for "Women in Technology" comprised of 15 employees from across Penn State IT. The group is in the planning stages and hopes to offer professional development, training, and networking opportunities to raise awareness regarding key issues facing women in STEM fields. In addition, the group is reviewing best practices of other higher education institutions.***
- A best practice is advertising ITS jobs nationally. The review team acknowledges that it is difficult for the University to compete with national salary averages in the IT sector.

Education and Scholarship

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

- ITS does not address this Challenge.
- While ITS is not an academic unit, it works with many such units throughout the University in support of diversity within the curriculum. In future reporting, ITS may want to consider including information about these efforts, particularly its vital support for online courses, which reach many thousands of students yearly.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Some growth for women in mid-level managerial positions (levels 3 and 4) from 2010 to 2014 has occurred, but the actual increase is only a total of 3 out of 93 positions in 2014. ***RESPONSE: Leadership programs like ITLP are being used to develop a higher degree of leadership capacity in IT staff (including those of diverse backgrounds). Additionally, ITSCollab (a leadership and collaboration incubator) as been a***

place for creating leadership habits and practices among IT staff (approx. 38% of ITSCollab membership is female).

- The data presented in this Challenge deal with gender exclusively. What about staff from other groups, such as race/ethnicity, LGBT, and disabilities?

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ITS incorporates diversity in its staff training.
- ITS has been supporting the University Accessibility Team and has formed a similar team within ITS (the Accessible Technology and Information Committee).
- ITSCollab meets monthly to build partnerships and improve climate and productivity. An update on the progress of this group would be helpful. Do diverse staff (gender, racial/ethnicity, etc.) participate in the group?
- Diversity demographics are also not mentioned for the Enterprise System Advisory Council (under development) and the Board of Executive Decision Makers.