Penn State Berks’ 2014–19 strategic plan shows robust progress for the proposals outlined in its 2010–15 Framework unit diversity strategic plan. The 2014–19 plan includes an assessment plan for desired strategic initiatives, which consists of five mechanisms: institutional level, general education program, co-curricular programs, academic programs, and course level. Berks includes six modules in their strategic plan, which articulate well with their focus on being a “learning-centered college” and embrace a number of endeavors intended to establish a supportive campus climate for diverse populations. Building from successful programs introduced in the previous cycle, the current plan lists a number of activities intended to increase the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff. Of particular note are efforts to improve retention/graduation rates among students from underrepresented/underserved groups.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
• Several diversity initiatives have been developed, such as Hispanic Heritage Month and Pride Month. With metrics and assessment, these initiatives have the potential to become best practices.
• The plan seeks to restructure the campus-wide Diversity Committee. The goal of developing “an integrated and college-wide diversity plan” is commended.
• Berks’ plans to include student government in crafting diversity and inclusion goals, and encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to participate in student leadership are impressive.
• The development of programs such as International Student Orientation, Lion’s Path Summer Bridge Program, and the Multicultural Peer Mentoring Program are laudable additions to programs intended to increase diversity and inclusion across the curriculum.
• The campus is encouraged to continue to include members of the faculty and staff at all levels from underrepresented/underserved groups, e.g., women, LGBTQA, veterans, and adult learners in diversity, inclusion and equity efforts and to recognize the benefits of a diverse workforce in its own right in addition to the impact this group has on student recruitment and retention.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
• Several new organizations representing diverse students, such as the African Student Union and the Student Veterans Association, now exist alongside the Student Government Association. Berks is encouraged to continue to build on this undertaking.
• Berks has worked to cultivate and augment partnerships to create a more inclusive campus community. One such partnership is the Department of Multicultural Affairs’ partnership with the Berks Multicultural Consortium. How will the college measure the success of these partnerships?

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body
• The review team noted the increased enrollment of Hispanic/Latino, Black/African-American, International, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Were there specific actions utilized to create this success?
• Enrollment decreased for Asian American students. What factors led to this decrease? What can be done to address this change?
• The mentoring program that pairs underrepresented/underserved students with faculty and staff is noteworthy. How will the success of this program be measured?
• The plan lists a number of exemplary programs, including the “Seizing Success” and “We are Building for Success,” which focus on improving student learning outcomes in the first year. Plans to assess efficacy will be crucial to evaluating their success.
• Campus-wide diversity events are highlighted in the plan. Developing metrics and assessment will help gauge the success of these programs moving forward.
• Clarification of articulation agreements that will support diversity and inclusion at the college would be appreciated.
• Berks is applauded for its efforts to interact with youth from the surrounding community in order to stress the importance of higher education.
• Plans to make retention a campus-wide project are noted. How will the Diversity Committee assist with this venture?
• More detail regarding plans to advance diversity projects in local schools is needed. Berks is strongly encouraged to develop metrics and assessment to guide this and similar future endeavors.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce
• Data compiled by Berks show international, women, and faculty from diverse racial/ethnic groups increased during the previous strategic planning cycle. Similar data for staff is absent.
• Several promising initiatives were enacted to recruit and retain diverse populations, including the relationship established with the Forum on Black Affairs, the Lead-to-Succeed Faculty and Staff Mentoring Program, and providing search committee members with education and information about recruiting members of underrepresented/underserved groups.
• Nine programs and professional development opportunities were made available to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. Metrics and assessment will delineate the success of these programs moving forward.
• The inclusion of faculty and staff diversity programs as part of annual review process is meritorious.

Education and Scholarship

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters U.S. and International Cultural Competencies
• Berks has increased the level of faculty-student engagement outside of the classroom, particularly through the Lead-to-Succeed Faculty and Staff Mentoring Program.
• More information regarding diversity and course offerings would be helpful.
• Plans to include a diversity statement in each syllabus would nurture a strong commitment to this Challenge.
• The proposal to train faculty, staff, and administrators in best practices for integrating diversity in teaching and learning is outstanding.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management
• Cultural, arts, and lecture events have been used to facilitate training opportunities for a diverse management team. As stated previously, the development of metrics and assessment will be critical.
• The plan to foster “diverse management teams at all levels of the college” would nurture a strong commitment to this Challenge.
• More specific information regarding how Berks’s senior leadership will promote diversity would be beneficial.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals
• Coordinating a review of current organizational arrangements among offices providing services to underrepresented/underserved groups will leverage systems of accountability to enhance a culture of inclusion across the college.