

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

Penn State Hazleton's 2010–15 *Framework* unit diversity strategic plan prioritized diversity and inclusion from the perspective of infrastructure and leadership. The Diversity Affairs Committee was charged with both reviewing the University's *Framework* strategic plan as well as implementing initiatives, a noteworthy strategy.

The campus' 2014–19 strategic plan also calls for major diversity initiatives, and Hazleton did an admirable job defining and valuing diversity by weaving it into the mission and vision statements found in Appendix B: Penn State Hazleton Framework for Diversity Response. Along with this appendix, most of the diversity efforts are identified/registered under Theme 4: Foster Diversity, which is part of Appendix A: Action Plans 2014–15. This theme includes eleven initiatives and follows through with action plans involving top leadership and others across campus. This inclusive undertaking throughout is commendable, but how these endeavors will be implemented remains vague. What are the assessment indicators? The action plans lack baselines, data, and metrics for evaluating progress, and the measurable actions to be carried out are quite generalized. The strategic plan acknowledges the need for an assessment protocol, and the review team could not adequately evaluate the strength of the plan without the protocol already in place. Therefore, the team recommends that Hazleton develop strategies to gather data and gauge progress, especially on those ventures that drive creative strategies for recruiting and retaining underrepresented/underserved students, faculty, and staff. **RESPONSE: Given this feedback along with that of the Strategic Plan, we have gone back and added expected achievements, a timeline for completion, and the area of responsibility for each of our submissions for the Strategic Plan including diversity.**

Finally, it is unclear how the 2010–15 plan articulates with the 2014–19 plan. Appendix B reflects on past progress, but the linkage between the respective plans is thin. Consider connecting past, present, and future strategies and capitalize on the opportunity to implement a tracking mechanism for each Challenge and for key initiatives. The review team encourages the campus to continue to find ways to leverage its existing demographics to impact its diversity efforts. Since diversity is clearly a priority at Hazleton, a thorough assessment of measurable outcomes indicators could guide Hazleton to a successful future. **RESPONSE: As noted above each of our initiatives are measurable and tied to a timeline for success in the current version of the Strategic Plan.**

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- A definition of diversity is thoughtfully integrated into *both* the mission and vision statements found in the Framework for Diversity Response.
- The newly written statements for the 2014–19 plan express the need to embrace diversity only in the mission statement. It is unclear if both statements are working in concert to represent Hazleton's diversity and inclusion aspirations. **RESPONSE: The Vision statement has been revised to more accurately represent the aspirations of the campus while extending the mission statement.**

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- Providing recognition to campus community members that promote diversity might be helpful. **RESPONSE: We have piloted in the past a recognition award to campus personnel that has highlighted and honored their diversity efforts. We will continue this in the future. The awards are presented at our annual Years of Service recognition luncheon.**
- The plan to create a culture of inclusion that supports teamwork, cooperation, and employee involvement is useful, but baselines and metrics to assess outcomes are needed. **RESPONSE: Metrics, timelines, and accountability have been added to each of the initiatives within our Strategic Plan.**

- The measurable indicators provided from the Quality of Life report (a tool used to measure student satisfaction that was completed by students living on the Hazleton campus) are commendable.
- Potential best practices: a diversity website that lists the campus' diversity mission and vision as well as the members of the Diversity Affairs Committee; the expansion of the academic and co-curricular offerings addressing diversity; and the implementation of campus-wide community service/service learning projects.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- Statistics provided in the 2010–15 diversity response area demonstrate the campus' strength and commitment to the recruitment of a diverse student body as it relates to race/ethnicity. To leverage increased progress, consider identifying and further emphasizing the drivers of this success. **RESPONSE: *We have identified the drivers of success in those areas which include out of state recruitment especially in northern New Jersey and the greater metropolitan New York regions. We continue to request as many out of state recruiting opportunities as possible. Additionally we continue and are looking to expand our body of international students specifically through our work with initiatives in India. Hazleton is also a diverse community and while we are successful with our Hazleton recruitment we are purposefully working on building stronger relationships with the school district and the Hazleton One Integration Project which operates as a community center for the Hispanic population in order to increase the local Hispanic students on campus.***
- Working in collaboration with OPIA to garner retention-rate changes is laudable; also, campus efforts to explore initiatives that will increase the recruitment and retention of students from other populations that are identified as having variations with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, veteran, and adult learner status are exemplary.
- Potential best practices: financial support through scholarships and other means and the enrollment management task force study charged with identifying ways to enhance the recruitment of a diverse student population, with a report expected by fall 2014.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- Hazleton was challenged by substantial workforce turnover within the last five years, which presents an opportunity to diversify. Diversifying the workforce to more accurately mirror the population being served should be the ultimate goal. **RESPONSE: *The campus actively seeks out diverse candidates and does so by having an active diversity representative on every search committee.***
- The continued efforts to identify a diversity representative on every new hire search committee are outstanding.
- The review team is hopeful that the Bilingual (Spanish) Admissions Counselor position, charged with the recruitment of Hispanic/Latino students, can soon be filled, possibly with a candidate from a diverse background. This endeavor also supports Challenge 3. **RESPONSE: *The position when filled was successful. When enrollments strengthen we would definitely look to fill this position again. For now, budgetary constraints keep us from proceeding.***
- Although the need to engage in recruitment strategies is mentioned in the 2014–19 strategic plan, it is concerning that no specific actions are identified. **RESPONSE: *The specific recruitment strategies are part of the yearly Action Plans in support of the Strategic Plan. The overall recruitment plan is guided by a report of a Working Group on Recruitment which is in its second year of implementation and is highly specific.***

Education and Scholarship

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

- The faculty report on classroom synergies that emphasize the roles of diverse people and cultures in science exploration is excellent.
- Potential best practices: partnerships with other international universities and organizations (e.g., study abroad programs in Norway and India, the India Initiative, and membership in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Diversity Education Consortium).

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Campus leadership and management have evolved over the past five years with two hires that are women. Searches were advertised nationally and each search committee had at least one diversity advocate from the Diversity Affairs Committee. This strategy might be a potential best practice.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- The construction of a multi-purpose “meditation center” shows promise. Having a plan that details how this center will be evaluated for efficacy would be helpful. ***RESPONSE: The plan for assessment of the Meditation Center will be formulated in the Fall of 2015 by the Office of Student Affairs & Engagement in collaboration with the Diversity Affairs Committee.***
- Potential best practice: formation of the Diversity Affairs Committee.