

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

Penn State Lehigh Valley (PSLV) has developed a strong and inclusive strategic plan in broad consultation with faculty, staff, students, and the surrounding community. The plan clearly engages the seven Challenges with specific strategies and action items in each. The diversity mission statement outlines a broad vision for continuous improvement, and the plan includes a strategic planning principle stating, "PSLV will recognize, celebrate, and support the unique differences among our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members." The review team commends PSLV for taking the 2010-15 Feedback Report seriously and responding to the recommendations within as appropriate. While the layout of the plan is very well done, it appears that each section of the document is not fully integrated into the larger plan and there is a need to identify action steps throughout. A mention of diversity in the opening statements by the Chancellor and the Director for Academic Affairs would have elevated its overall importance within the plan as a whole.

**RESPONSE:**

*We are glad that the reviewers see that we take the diversity strategic planning process and the final document seriously and that we are implementing diversity strategic actions throughout various aspects of the campus. We'd also like to point out that page 102 of the Diversity Strategic Plan (located within the larger campus strategic plan) is a section entitled, "Diversity Initiatives Integrated into the 2014-19 Strategic Plan." It contains two pages of strategies that support diversity integration throughout the charts of strategic initiatives developed to progress the campus' three main goals. It was important to PSU-LV to intertwine diversity initiatives directly into the full campus strategic plan to ensure diversity is an essential, key component of the work being accomplished over the next 5-plus years.*

*While the Chancellor and DAA letters do not specifically mention the term "diversity," there are essential elements of diversity factors built into these narratives, including:*

*Dr. Williams, Chancellor (page 8):*

*- "Our new location... opens expanded regions of our service area for student recruitment and allows us new accessibility..."*

*- "All of this will enable us to complete our mission of making our graduates global citizens in an ever more expansive world."*

*- "The resulting growth of our campus is reflective of the vibrant and growing region known as the Lehigh Valley. We look forward to working closely with our community..."*

*Dr. Thigpen, DAA (page 9):*

*- "Academic excellence starts with providing access to university learning opportunities... including [for] those over twenty-five years of age."*

*- "Academic excellence may start in traditional classrooms and quickly expands... as we increase our competence in tapping into virtual learning environments."*

*- "I also see academic excellence represented by the access to global awareness and quality of global experiences for our students... We are committed to a model of encouraging travel embedded in our courses which promotes better understanding of global issues. We plan to increase ... these experiences, along with better international understanding for all students, including those who cannot afford to journey abroad."*

*These two letters support our vision, mission, and core values (one of which is Diversity- page 5), as well as our Planning Principles (page 6), which includes the principle that "PSLV will recognize, celebrate, and support the unique differences among our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members." These letters and planning statements provide the framework for the action plans supporting the seven diversity challenges for the campus.*

## **Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

### **Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity**

- Diversity among community members and alumni in addition to diversity among students, staff, and faculty is clearly noted. Missing in some places is diversity among administrators. **RESPONSE: Penn State Lehigh only has one position categorized as administrator (this is for the Chancellor), which can be seen to skew the overall percentage of administrative diversity. Chancellor Williams will be retiring this summer, and the campus has upheld all elements through Human Resources for a diversified search process.**
- The team appreciates PSLV's broad definition of diversity, inclusive of key groups of individuals, such as first-generation college students and veterans. However, attention to different groups is not consistent across from section to section. **RESPONSE: Penn State Lehigh Valley embraces all populations and strives to provide the best learning environment for various groups through programming, services, and policies established in the actions within each challenge. Our Enrollment Department has created an Enrollment Strategic Plan (referenced on page 113) as a Best Practice that outlines specific strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse population, which incorporates the continuum of the education process (from application to graduation) for students from all backgrounds and designations. This plan will be updated for 2015-16 and will include, once again, strategies related to various diverse groups and populations.**
- PSLV pledges support of the Diversity Committee in its recognition and celebration of multiple definitions of diversity on campus and beyond. How will this spirit of diversity be leveraged beyond the committee to achieve the broader diversity-related goals of the campus? **RESPONSE: As noted, page 102 of the diversity strategic plan outlines all the initiatives within the main plan where diversity is recognized and strategic initiatives will enhance and progress diversity, ensuring that diversity is a campus-wide initiative and not just a responsibility of the Diversity Committee.**
- A number of programs are well described, but lack evidence of impact through measurable outcomes. **RESPONSE: Each Challenge contains its own table, and each table contains a section called Measures of Success. This section showcases the performance indicators that will be used to gauge progress and track success for each of the Challenges. In regards to Diversity Programming, it is stated that the campus will collect and use the following evidence (page 105-106):**
  - **Tracking of number of participants at each program (faculty/staff and students) to show increased participation**
  - **Program evaluation results from diversity programs to enhance quality and better meet participant needs**
  - **Growth of study abroad programming, including increased participants, programs, and scholarship funds**

**The Challenge also outlines the new DeLong Art Gallery as a best practice for bringing fine arts and arts-based programming to the campus and community. Measures of success are defined as number of gallery visitors, course interactions and event participants. Each programs' impact is to further develop the campus' shared and inclusive understanding of diversity.**

### **Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate**

- The faculty/staff climate survey launched in January 2012 is presented as an "action tool," with plans to administer another survey in 2015-2016. It is not clear how or if the survey results were used to inform decision-making in support of a welcoming campus climate. Were data collected and analyzed?
- Similarly, the plan indicates that student satisfaction surveys are conducted, however, it is not clear how or if the resulting data are used to improve campus climate. **RESPONSE: Page 110 of the plan outlines the data collected and the significant findings of both the Faculty/Staff Climate Survey 2012 and the Student Satisfaction and Demographics Survey 2013. Highlights of actual percentages are provided**

*and hyperlinks to the full data reports are supplied. As indicated, the surveys have “allowed campus administration and departments to ensure continuous quality improvement of its programs and services and gain feedback about the interest in and need for new initiatives....that can increase its welcome-ness for all campus constituents.” This includes use of the data with various campus groups, including the Staff Advisory Council, Faculty Senate, Enrollment Management, Diversity Committee, and the Advisory Board. The data reports were presented at All Campus Days for all faculty and staff and are available on the Planning website.*

- The review team notes that a “Climate Committee” was formed in fall 2011 and disbanded less than two years later. A “Diversity Committee” was formed in 2014. Clarification of the roles of these two groups and the rationale behind the new committee’s formation would be helpful. **RESPONSE:** *Below is an excerpt of the letter provided to Climate Committee members from Chancellor Williams on November 1, 2013, explaining the dissolving of the Climate Committee:*

*“Two years ago, we asked you to serve on a Climate & Culture Committee charged with reviewing and recommending changes at the campus that would support a welcoming image for all employees and students. I must say that you took that charge seriously and recommended to Dr. Thigpen and me some interesting and valuable suggestions. Many of your recommendations have been implemented, most recently, with the establishment of a Staff Advisory Council which will meet for the first time in the next few weeks. We are now finding that much of what your committee was reviewing is also being reviewed by other committees (Strategic Planning and Diversity Committee, to name a few) --- many of which you also hold membership. In light of this redundancy, Ken and I have decided to dissolve the Climate & Culture Committee. We would like to thank you for the time and effort that you have contributed to the Culture Committee. It truly has provided us with great insight and suggestions for a better Penn State Lehigh Valley. We look forward to your continued involvement in the existing campus committees.”*

*At the same time, it should be noted that the main purpose of the Climate Committee was to help the campus transition from Fogelsville to Center Valley and to blend “old” ideas with “new” policies, as we settled into a new location. Once we had made this transition successfully, there was less of a need for the Climate Committee, which led to a more robust Diversity Committee and Staff Advisory Council. Since then, the Diversity Committee and the Staff Advisory Council have continued to meet. Each Committee has made recommendations to campus administration for changes that enhance the campus climate and have offered programming and professional development towards this goal.*

### **Representation (Access and Success)**

#### **Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body**

- It is impressive that the PSLV student body demographics are close to or exceed those of its service area. The plan would benefit from more information on the strategies deployed to achieve these results.

**RESPONSE:** *As stated on page 111 under Recent Progress, “Due to a number of targeted programs and strategies, the enrollment of diverse students at Penn State Lehigh Valley has grown. Similarly, the official retention percentage of the campus has increased over the past number of years. These increases are due to a number of factors...” (Page 48 of the strategic plan offers a comprehensive look at these strategies). Included are:*

*-Implementation of an Enrollment Strategic Plan which outlines specific strategies and actions related to enrollment and retention (this was recognized as a best practice by the diversity plan reviewers). This organized, strategic effort undoubtedly aided in enrollment increases, including those of diverse populations.*

***-Weekly Enrollment Management meetings that allowed key individuals on campus to share enrollment and retention information, to analyze data of our service area, and to formulate specific actions to increase enrollment and retention (including strengthened connections with guidance counselors at local high schools, enhanced recruitment of student athletes through the addition of collegiate sports, ongoing dialogue with and presence at local community colleges, a pre-college retreat to discuss strategies related to attracting a diverse range of students, among others).***

***-The creation of a new retention program called the Lion Academy. The pilot program enrolled 25 students, 20 of which were Black/African American. 10 were female. 80% of the participants successfully completed the course. Of these students, 71% ended with a higher semester GPA than was predicted for them, based on enrollment data. . .***

***-The use of HDFS 287W (the First Year Experience Course- Intercultural Community Building) to better track the performance of students, including those with early progress reports, and to offer all students valuable lessons in time management, financial literacy, and “fitting into” higher education along with connections to Learning Center resources and peer tutors. In 2015, nearly 80% of students agreed that FYE helped them in the transition from high school to college.***

***-The campus has also hired a Retention Coordinator who has worked with the Office of Institutional Planning on a Retention Cohort Study to analyze the retention rates and factors of first-time, degree-seeking students who entered PSU-LV in Fall 2013. The study found that of the 230 students who entered, 172 were retained. Factors such as race/ethnicity, adjusted gross income, and gender were analyzed. It was found that Hispanic and Black students were retained at a lower rate (67% and 54%) versus Asian and White students (82% and 78%); those with adjusted gross incomes under \$60,000 were retained at a lesser rate (67%) than those \$60,000 and above (86%); and male and female were retained at the same percentage (75%). This information is being used with the newly created Retention Committee to develop action plans based on the data.***

***-Additional recruiting strategies are available in the full Enrollment Strategic Plan noted within the Best Practices section on page 113 of the Diversity Strategic Plan. The hyperlink to this document, as it is included in the plan, is: <http://pslvplanning.com/campus-strategic-plans/enrollment-management-strategic-plan/>.***

- Reporting in this section of the plan is quite thorough, however, there is concern that the 3% of the student population who self-report as “not declared” are counted among the 34% who are considered “minority” students. This grouping has the potential to be misleading. The review team advises PSLV to separate the “undeclared” percentage from the “minority” category for a more accurate reflection of the racial/ethnic composition of its student body. **RESPONSE: This suggestion is noted and will be used in future reporting.**
- Flexibility in instructional delivery modes and planned collaborations with area high schools are approaches that have the potential to positively impact the recruitment and retention of underrepresented/underserved learners. **RESPONSE: This initiative will continue for our campus.**
- Upturns in enrollment and retention rates are attributed to a number of disparate factors. What evidence is available to accurately attribute these increases to specific actions or initiatives? **RESPONSE: Refer to above strategies in bullet one. Each of these initiatives is being assessed for success and linkages to specific actions. Our enrollment is steady, while our retention has seen a substantial increase over the past few years- which we attribute to the various, well-rounded strategies employed.**
- Enrollment trends shown in the appendix are promising. The review team suggests that the historical evolution of the demographic composition of the student population be analyzed to illuminate diversity trends over time. Continued tracking of longitudinal data would enhance future reporting. **RESPONSE: This information is available at <http://pslvplanning.com/campusenrollmentdata/>. A Trends Table, with factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, residency, etc., is updated each year with subsequent years remaining for ongoing trends analysis.**

- PSLV’s Enrollment Management Department undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2012. The resultant 2013-14 enrollment management strategic plan is unquestionably a best practice. **RESPONSE: Thank you. We are in the process of updating the EM Plan for 2015–16.**

**Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce**

- Sustained recruitment of faculty and staff from underrepresented/underserved groups is listed as a strategic initiative, but specific means of accomplishing this goal are not reported. Benchmarking with comparable Penn State campuses might prove useful. **RESPONSE: The following data has been pulled from iTwo Official Human Resources Tables for ongoing comparisons (based on similar faculty/staff size) and benchmarking.**

**Full-Time Faculty and Staff Breakdowns by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2014**

<i>Campus</i>	<i>Total F/S</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>H/L</i>	<i>American Indian/Alaskan</i>	<i>Two or more races</i>	<i>International</i>	<i>Percentage who are non-white*</i>
<i>Lehigh Valley</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>York</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>Schuylkill</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3%</i>
<i>Beaver</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>8%</i>
<i>Brandywine</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>Hazleton</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6%</i>
<i>Mont Alto</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8%</i>

*\*Percentage excludes race/ethnicity unknown and international categories*

- Use of proper search committee protocols to ensure diverse applicant pools is correct procedure. Do any of the procedures in place have unique features and/or corresponding measurable outcomes that merit acknowledgment as potential best practices? **RESPONSE: All appropriate HR protocols are followed in regards to ensuring diverse applicant pools.**
- The “Pawsitivity” faculty/staff focus groups delivered findings that resulted in the creation of a Staff Advisory Council consisting of representatives from several campus departments. The review team questions if the newly created council encourages the same open communication that was appreciated in the original focus groups. **RESPONSE: Yes. The Staff Advisory Council (SAC) is comprised of 10 council members that represent a range of staff departments (Advising, Academic Affairs, Corporate and Community Education, Enrollment, Marketing, Development, Information Technology, and Security). Prior to each meeting, an email is sent to the staff list-serv alerting staff that they can share ideas, concerns, and topics of interest with council representatives for discussion at the upcoming meeting. Individuals are also welcome to set-up a time to meet with the SAC, if desired.**
- The Signature Initiative/Best Practice section of the plan is a collection of hosted events with no corresponding evidence of impact to qualify them as signature initiatives or best practices. What measures of success merit repeating these events? **RESPONSE: Program evaluations were conducted for both events held as part of the Speak up, Break Down diversity-based professional development series for campus faculty and staff. As noted on page 115, 100% of faculty and staff who attended the session on stereotypes stated that they gained knowledge they could use in their interactions with diverse students, while anecdotal evidence showed that faculty and staff appreciated the faculty/staff/student panels that shared multiple perspectives of diversity. A noted measure of success for future programming in this series includes the “ongoing evaluation of the quality and benefit of**

*diversity professional development” and an “increase in agreement/satisfaction levels with faculty/staff factors from the 2012 Faculty/Staff Climate Survey to subsequent surveys” (page 115).*

## **Education and Scholarship**

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

- PSLV has clearly devoted resources and attention to international studies and has been formally recognized by the Institute of International Education (IIE) for its accomplishments in this area. In fact, PSLV is the only Commonwealth Campus so recognized. Current study abroad participation of PSLV students is 10%, which meets the goal set in the 2010-2015 plan. Additional information regarding the means by which this goal was achieved will likely yield a best practice.
- It is commendable that strategies and actions in support of this Challenge include both international opportunities and means by which global education is infused in the local curriculum to be experienced by most students.
- Development of partnerships with global, multicultural universities has the potential to be a best practice, but evidence of success is lacking.

*RESPONSE: Page 47 of the strategic plan details International Education at Penn State Lehigh Valley. Included is information about the Teaching International initiative and Global Study Abroad opportunities. As noted, PSU-LV sent more than 75 students (10% of the total student body) on study abroad trips in 2014. These trips connected faculty and students with credit-embedded coursework aligned with the following global universities and learning centers:*

- Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC) in Peru*
- University of Guanajuato in Mexico*
- Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama*
- Jiangnan University in China*

*In November 2014, a Global Expo was held to provide students with information about the seven trips scheduled for 2015, including Netherlands, China, Costa Rica, Panama, Greece, Mexico, and Africa, which will connect Penn State Lehigh Valley students and faculty to a range of global, multicultural universities.*

## **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

### **Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management**

- This Challenge receives little attention in PSLV’s plan. Methods seem to focus largely on placing particular individuals on key diversity-related committees. There is no reported data on the diversity of the leadership itself, nor are there any specific plans of action described for diversifying leadership and management. What specific actions will be taken to address this Challenge? Disaggregated data on the demographics of PSLV leadership across the campus along with a specific action plan to increase the diversity in each area would strengthen reporting.

*RESPONSE: Penn State Lehigh Valley continues to embrace the notion of diversity in leadership and management. As was noted in Challenge 4, the campus aims to recruit a diverse workforce and is currently number 3 of 7 in regards to the percentage of diverse faculty/staff among campuses of similar workforce sizes. There is still progress to made, because diversity is admittedly lacking at the leadership level. However, the campus has focused on deliberate changes to advance this mission. One such example is the recruitment of diverse coaches (African American/Black and Middle Eastern) to better represent the backgrounds of our student athletes. These coaches have not only served as campus leaders and mentors for current students but have led the development of the campus’ highly successful athletic programming and have played a significant role in the recruitment of student athletes of various, diverse backgrounds.*

*The campus would like to note that it remains a challenge to recruit diverse faculty and staff who can move into leadership and management positions due to the competitive nature of higher education, particularly including the salary ranges offered by other universities in comparison to the salary ranges able to be offered at the campus level.*

**Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals**

- Several mentions of “measures” and “evidence of data” lack specificity.
- The strategic initiatives listed as “new efforts” are largely ongoing initiatives. What new organizational structures will support PSLV’s diversity goals?
- The Faculty Mentoring Program is a best practice
- The Visioning Committee has the potential to be a best practice if it incorporates visioning related to diversity issues.

***RESPONSE:** New organizational structures include the appointment of a regional Human Resources Director who will serve the Lehigh Valley campus and offer linkages to human resources within the University in a more organized, deliberate manner. Coupled with this is the implementation of the You@PSU performance management system at Penn State Lehigh Valley. The campus has taken this new initiative seriously and anticipates that once the roll-out is complete, the system will aid in better coordinating our organizational efforts by recognizing the work of staff and better aligning each staff member with specific initiatives related to diversity (professional development, policies, organizational structures, etc.) One such reorganization occurred this year when our Assistant Director of University Relations position was restructured to become the Director of Enrollment Marketing, filling the distinct need for more focused enrollment-based marketing of the campus. This new position now works directly with the Enrollment Department to develop targeted recruitment of diverse populations and to showcase the diverse range of programs, options, and services available at Penn State Lehigh Valley. Similarly, the Enrollment Department has recently hired two Admissions Counselors who are both bilingual (English/Spanish and English/Arabic) to increase the access and services available to diverse populations.*

*As noted, the Visioning Committee is considered a best practice of organizational change at the campus. This new committee linked the Advisory Board with key faculty and staff to leverage the diverse backgrounds and connections of the Board with the expertise of the campus community. The sub-committees of the Visioning Committee are focused on three areas: Student Engagement, Community Engagement, and Campus Planning- all of which delve into diversity issues and factors (including additional scholarships for students, outreach to the service area, ensuring adequate space and facilities for an increasingly diverse population of both students and faculty/staff, etc.)*