

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

Efforts have clearly been made to ensure that Penn State Schuylkill's Strategic Theme 4: "Create a more inclusive, civil, and diverse learning community" is in line with the structure of *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State*. The review team recognizes the difficulties caused by the campus' lack of resources and enrollment constraints, as well as recent changes in leadership.

Turnover in leadership may account for the lack of continuity between the past and current plans that the review team noted. We anticipate positive changes as the leadership integrates diversity endeavors into how they think about and do their work at the highest level. The review team encourages the new chancellor to review the current plan and revise it based on his vision for Schuylkill and the recommendations provided here.

At this point the 2014–19 diversity plan could be strengthened by additional specificity. The broad goals have been established and moving forward it will be useful for the campus to explore what steps need to be taken to achieve these goals, who will be held responsible for identifying these steps, and which offices will implement, oversee, and assess the various initiatives. On a final note, the campus may want to be aware of referring to a "diverse student body" or a "diverse faculty and staff," without specifying the different categories within them. Strategies for attracting and retaining African American students to the Schuylkill campus will likely differ from those employed to attract and retain LGBTQ students, for example.

### **Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- Both the previous and current diversity strategic plans indicated that the campus was developing and refining a definition of diversity. The review team was interested in the progress that has been made and where this definition might be accessed. ***RESPONSE: The Schuylkill Diversity Committee is in the final stages of our "definition of diversity" and should have it available to review by the end of June 2015.***
- The numbered items under each initiative sound promising, however they generally lack specificity and are difficult to assess.

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

- Specific efforts to create a welcoming campus climate were not provided in this plan. As noted in the spring 2010 feedback report, Penn State Schuylkill is encouraged to articulate and accentuate the positive aspects of having a diverse and welcoming campus. ***RESPONSE: The efforts are embedded throughout our entire plan. Ex .Review and update our messaging both on and off campus to promote diversity and differences that we value on campus. Advertisements, our website, on-campus publications such as posters, pictures, etc. should reflect how we value diversity; Add a mandatory session on diversity and celebrating difference(s) as part of the new student orientation program.***

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

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

- Efforts are underway to recruit more veterans, adult learners and international students. It would be helpful to know the results of the previous recruitment programs that the campus plans to continue. ***RESPONSE: This was not actually included in the strategic plan that was submitted as our admissions office already approaches and addresses the recruitment of these student populations. In supporting students from these populations on campus we have recently created a Veteran's Lounge on campus and have re-energized a Veteran's and Active Military Club; for international students, the Office of Student Affairs and Admissions work collaboratively to support travel to and from campus, specific***

*student activities and residential programming geared towards international students and working with international students for setting up bank accounts, and travel to and from grocery and department stores for their personal needs.*

- The campus identifies several initiatives addressing this Challenge; the next step is to determine which unit or individual has the responsibility for implementing and assessing them. Similarly, it would be useful to know when, where, and how often these opportunities will occur and how they will be tracked or evaluated. **RESPONSE: All of the initiatives are being tracked by members of the Enrollment Management Team, which consists of representatives from Student Affairs, Admissions, Academic Affairs and the Office of the Registrar.**
- What conclusions have been drawn so far from the ongoing assessment of special living options? The team would have liked to have learned more about these SLOs, including their makeup and how they have evolved as a result of these assessments. Additional information may be helpful to other campuses and might reveal some best practices. **RESPONSE: Special Living Options have not been very successful in the past few years on campus. Students were choosing to live in SLO's for the better housing rather than the specific living option. We will not be offering SLO's in 2015-2106 as we examine, assess the need/want and decide future steps and options.**

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

- The campus's openness to intellectual diversity addresses an often neglected need in institutions of higher education.
- The goal to utilize central resources such as the AAO and OHR is prudent. These offices can provide support as well as share best practices from across the University.
- The SCOT analysis in appendix C reveals that lack of racial diversity among faculty and staff is a challenge. The review team was interested to know what plans the campus has underway to address this. **RESPONSE: The Diversity Committee will be meeting with the regional Human Resources representative to make sure that our search process for faculty and staff is as effective as it can be in recruiting a diverse pool of candidates. While the goal is to hire the best candidate for the job, we need to make sure that the pool is large and inclusive. We are examining the idea of creating a pool of resources to support searches. Additionally, we will work to identify additional sites to advertise positions (i.e. Diverse Issues in Higher Education).**
- The performance indicators in appendix D show declines in both female and minority faculty numbers. How does the campus understand this decline and what are the plans to address it? **RESPONSE: We are currently examining this trend to attempt to understand it.**

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- The goal of “emphasiz[ing] student capacity to understand contemporary U.S. diversity issues” is puzzling and needs to be clarified. **RESPONSE: This may be a poorly worded sentence and might be better as “Promote curricular and research initiatives that increase a student's opportunity and ability to understand domestic and international diversity issues”. By offering and promoting such initiatives, students will have a better understanding of diversity issues that are prevalent in the United States as well as internationally.**
- The plan to “designate a point person and create an office of Global Programs” at the campus may be laudable, however it raises a number of questions. What would be the responsibilities of the new global programs office and to whom would it report? This might be another area, similar to OHR and AAO noted above, upon which to rely on central resources. In the 2010–2015 diversity plan, the campus stated that it was “continuing development of [a] Diversity Resource Center and Diversity Commons.” It is unclear whether the office of global programs is intended as a supplement to or in lieu of an existing diversity office. **RESPONSE: We do not have an existing diversity office and the recommendation to rely on**

*central resources is one that we will accept as we do not have the resources to effectively create an office of Global Programs. We will designate one staff/faculty member on campus as the liaison to the central office.*

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- The campus leadership recommits itself to continuing efforts to diversify University leadership. Benchmark data here would help evaluate progress made to date on this commitment. ***RESPONSE: We are examining and discussing this goal in order to best approach it. We will begin to collect data immediately for benchmarking and future assessment.***
- Penn State Schuylkill pledges to make all appropriate efforts to ensure diverse candidate pools. This is a laudable goal.

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

- The goals of aligning the campus organization to support diversity goals, establishing lines of accountability, and identifying metrics to measure progress are all important. In addition, it is advisable to delineate the steps that will be taken in order to achieve these goals. ***RESPONSE: The diversity committee is working on recommendations to the Chancellor on steps that must be taken to achieve these goals. While adding mandatory accountabilities on a JRW might not be possible, the committee is working on ongoing professional development opportunities open to all faculty/staff as well as a recognition/reward program for those who participate on a regular basis.***