

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

Fall 2014

Penn State Wilkes-Barre

Penn State Wilkes-Barre's 2010–15 *Framework* diversity strategic plan was thorough and detailed and contained goals, measures of success, and anticipated resources. The review team notes that the 2014–19 strategic plan is well structured and easy to follow, but its diversity and inclusion goals are not as comprehensive as they were in the previous plan. The current plan does address campus climate and the recruitment of diverse students and staff. Strategies, tactics, responsible positions, measurable outcomes, and timeframes are clearly listed throughout. No details or data are provided, however, about implementation and assessment. Similarly, data illuminating the current demographic makeup of the campus population are lacking.

Wilkes-Barre has faced a decline in enrollment for the past twenty years and is in an area suffering from ongoing decreases in high school graduates. These factors drive the first goal of the plan, which is to increase student enrollment, though missed opportunities for recruiting underrepresented/underserved students show through at points. Recruiting *more* students and recruiting *diverse* students can and should be complimentary. Goals 2 and 3 address academic excellence and outreach, and both can lead to increased enrollment and improved financial status. The review team found potential unidentified opportunities for enhanced diversity for both goals.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- Wilkes-Barre's mission and values statements now definitively articulate the importance of diversity and inclusion which, if they could be linked to positive outcomes, could be a best practice. How are the ideals of these statements being shared across campus with all stakeholders? **RESPONSE: *The mission and value statements have been slightly modified from those of the last strategic plan which were clearly posted in all campus buildings and on the campus website. The newer/current version of mission and value statements would be somewhat similar distribution as well as being displayed at campus-wide meetings and distributed to Advisory Board members.*** For example, one of the plan's objectives is to "Continue operating in a culture that embraces inclusivity." A related strategy is to "Develop a campus atmosphere welcoming of differences." These goals are encouraging, but how will they be accomplished and assessed? Incorporating diversity into the guiding principles of the campus is laudable, but implementation and assessment are acid tests and the natural and necessary next steps. **RESPONSE: *As identified in 4.5.1 for measurable outcomes, there will be a campus survey approximately every 3 years with the first year baseline established in 2015–16 assessing the campus climate including inclusiveness. The WB campus already has an identified Spanish speaker, Hispanic DAA, and 30% of our current faculty are from underrepresented groups. The campus began discussions with African American males on campus that was expanded to African American females and others on campus, including our last Advisory Board where there was a discussion of diversity and inclusiveness.***

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- The plan cites the implementation of a campus climate survey every three years. Survey data are not included so the team was unable to assess whether or not this endeavor contributed to progress. **RESPONSE: *The WB campus will conduct the campus survey at least every 3 years and will begin with 2015–16. We have already begun exploring the survey with the Center for Survey Research at the Harrisburg Campus.***

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- Recruitment of "diverse and underrepresented student groups" is a positive goal. How does Wilkes-Barre define this population? Including the definitions of specific underrepresented/underserved populations

would be helpful. Data, benchmarks, and concrete thresholds of success would help define what constitutes success for this goal. **RESPONSE: Underrepresented groups on the WB campus are defined in a number of ways using various criteria, including race, ethnicity, 1st generation, disabilities, age (adult), and veterans. The offices and individuals assigned for reporting on the achievements in this and other objectives have outlined their data sources and the type and frequency of their expected reports.**

- The recruitment of international students is noted in the plan, but what efforts are underway to target underrepresented/underserved students in the campus' immediate service area? **RESPONSE: The population in the campus service area (approximately half of Luzerne County, Wyoming, Bradford, and Sullivan Counties) is significantly homogeneous in terms of race (white). Only 4.6% of the population in the Luzerne County portion are African American (2013) and 8.5% Hispanic (2013). Wyoming, Bradford and Sullivan counties have a much higher white concentration. The campuses' promotion material, including in the public media (newspapers, billboards, etc.) as well as social media emphasizes diversity of student backgrounds as much as possible. The campus has worked to generate student profiles for press releases and promotion and utilizes as many different profiles of diverse students as listed above. Our TRiO grant also focuses on increasing 1st generation, low-income, or disabled students.**
- Ensuring inclusiveness in athletic recruitment is a tactic that could have several positive outcomes: attracting athletes because they will be able to play at Wilkes-Barre; bringing more diversity to the campus (female athletes are mentioned); and attracting non-athletes who are interested in sports. If this initiative is successful, it may have the potential to be a best practice. **RESPONSE: The WB campus continues to focus on using athletics to spur recruitment of underrepresented groups on campus. With the appointment of a new Athletic Director, who previously served in Enrollment Management, team coaches have pushed hard on recruiting, including with underrepresented groups. Many have made numerous efforts (within athletic guidelines) to recruit from urban communities with higher concentrations of underrepresented groups.**
- Cultivating a campus environment that welcomes diverse students is a strategy listed in support of the objective to "increase the retention and persistence to graduation of current students." More detail on how this goal will be accomplished and measured would be helpful. **RESPONSE: Following the recent police interactions with African Americans and the media coverage, a number of African American male athletes moved to express support for fair and equitable treatment of all African Americans. Thus a series of very enlightening discussions were held with these athletes. The discussions were later expanded to females of color, and other interested parties on campus. Using these discussions as a basis, the needs of the WB students of color were presented to the Advisory Board for insight and discussion as well. The results will be used to formulate improved diversity programming for the campus.**
- The previous diversity strategic plan documented success in doubling the enrollment of women in four years. What strategies led to this success? Is this trend continuing? **RESPONSE: Any increase in female enrollment is difficult to attribute to any particular tactic. The campus continues to focus on STEM for women, has a camp for young females under the WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) program, increased athletic recruiting, or increased female faculty role models particularly in science and engineering. While the emphasis on recruiting females will continue, it is not specifically listed in the new strategic plan.**
- Targeting "locations populated by diverse students" and allocating "resources to attract qualified students of diverse backgrounds" are strategies listed in support of the objective to "continue operating in a culture that embraces inclusivity." What populations of students are sought? What action steps are planned? What resources will be needed? **RESPONSE: As noted, only 4.6% of Luzerne County is African American, concentrated mostly in the urban areas of Wilkes-Barre at 10.9% African American (2010). Hispanics make up 8.5% of Luzerne County and 11.3% of Wilkes-Barre (2010). Hazleton's concentration is much higher than Wilkes-Barre. The WB campus continues to visit and recruit strongly in Wilkes-Barre Area high schools and competes vigorously for students with local competition for what are mainly 1st generation African-American and Hispanic students.**
- The use of "Prior Learning Assessment" as a tool to attract adult learners is an exemplary and attainable goal. Details regarding the implementation and assessment of this effort would be useful. **RESPONSE: The**

WB campus has closely tracked the work of Michelle Rice and the policy changes to increase usage of prior learning assessments, and will continue to implement and track the success of this tool. This tool is of particular interest to WB because of the credit and certificate courses that are offered by its Continuing Education division, including on-site courses, courses at the Northern Tier Center in Towanda, and courses for specific disciplines seeking CE units for professional certification.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- One tactic in support of this Challenge is to “publish staff opportunities to attract a diverse pool of candidates,” but no specifics about this initiative are provided. **RESPONSE: See Below.**
- “Utilize University tracking of candidate diversity” is listed as a planned strategy, which raises the question of whether or not this approach is currently underway. What strategies are now in place to ensure diversity in candidate pools? **RESPONSE: See Below.**
- While the recruitment of a diverse workforce is a stated strategy, it is not evident whether or not definite strategies are in place to recruit underrepresented/underserved faculty. **RESPONSE: Faculty searches are advertised in professional and disciplinary media and also in media that targets qualified minorities. All tenure-track positions are vetted by the Affirmative Action Office before proceeding with the interview stage. Staff searches are published on the PSU website, in a local paper, and are referred to the Northeastern Pennsylvania Diversity Educational Consortium (NEPDEC) for distribution among their network to insure the widest possible notice to diverse applicants. Then, the University tracks via self-reporting applicants who denote minority or protected status and those classifications are checked. All of these efforts are routinely made to insure a rich pool of candidates.**
- Further information on the demographic composition of the existing workforce (faculty and staff) along with measureable goals for increased diversity would strengthen reporting. **RESPONSE: At the present time, 41% of full-time employees at the campus are male while 58% are female. However, the gender composition is unevenly split between faculty and staff. Our faculty composition is 73 % male and 27 % female. For comparison purposes, at the University College level the composition is 53 % M /47 % F, while for the whole University it is 61 % M / 39 % F. Conversely, the gender composition of staff is heavily weighted towards females (14% M/ 86%F) compared to the College (41% M/59% F) and University (45% M/55 %F). The race/ethnicity distribution shows that our faculty is more diverse than the College and similar to the University. At Penn State Wilkes-Barre, 70% of the faculty self-identified as White (compared to 77 % at UC and 74 % at PSU), 8.8 % as Black/African American (2.9% UC / 10.8 % PSU), 5.8 % as Hispanic/Latino (3.1 % UC / 3.0 % PSU), although only 2.9 % as Asian (7.3 % UC / 10.8 % PSU). A similar analysis for our staff shows a similar trend as 95% of the staff self-identified as White (85% UC / 88% PSU), 2.5% as Black/African American (5.7 % UC / 2.8% PSU) and 2.5% as Hispanic/Latino (2.8 % UC / 1.7 % PSU).**

Education and Scholarship

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

- Delivering programs of academic excellence is the second strategic goal in the plan. U.S. and international cultural competencies are not addressed explicitly for this goal. The review team suggests that the objectives supporting this goal be expanded to include cultural competencies. **RESPONSE: See Below.**
- The previous diversity strategic plan identified several international programs. It is not clear why those programs are not included in the current plan (either related to success or reasons why the programs were discontinued). **RESPONSE: The WB campus’ past efforts with international agreements were shuttered at the direction of the University. The India Initiative in IST, after being funded by campuses for a number of years, was sun-setted after the University determined to follow a different strategy. Through the India Initiative, WB received 3 students who successfully completed their 2+2 education in IST and are gainfully employed in the U.S. or India. The WB campus sought to revive African recruiting, especially from Nigeria, and began establishing relationships, but that too has been cut at University direction. However, the WB campus concurs with the review team and will expand the specific goals to**

include cultural competencies. The campus is awaiting the final results of the General Education Review Taskforce as there will be opportunities to include these competencies in existing or newly developed courses.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- This challenge was not addressed. **RESPONSE: The WB campus leadership is comprised of a Chancellor and 9 Directors. From these, 6 Directors (67 %) are female and 3 Directors (33 %) are male. In addition, one of these directors is from a Hispanic background, being the first among his colleagues at other campuses. While these demographics may not be ideal, any searches for new Campus Leadership and Management positions have a conscious effort to be advertised in media reaching qualified minority applicants as cited above. The goal in any and all searches is still to find the best candidate for the position.**

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- “Developing a campus atmosphere welcoming of differences” is a strategy listed in support of the objective to “continue operating in a culture that embraces inclusivity.” Related tactics call for assessing the climate periodically and responding proactively to potential problems. No assessment data or other details were included to elucidate progress, describe the current campus atmosphere, or outline future goals in support of this Challenge. **RESPONSE: As noted in the response to challenge 1, the campus will work to assess the campus atmosphere every 3 years beginning with an assessment in 2015–16 to establish a baseline. The campus has begun working with the Center for Survey Research at the Harrisburg Campus to start the process for the survey.**
- The tactic “Development for underrepresented groups” is listed in relation to the strategy “Promote staff development opportunities to strengthen the quality of the educational experience,” which is the last strategy listed under the objective, “Strengthen the quality of Penn State Wilkes-Barre’s current academic programs. Clarification is needed regarding this tactic. What is meant by “development of underrepresented groups”? Which populations are referenced here? **RESPONSE: The WB campus agrees that the tactic needs clarification and will rework and reword the tactic to insure a greater understanding. The purpose is truly to support training which makes all campus faculty, staff, and students better understand the necessity for making PSU WB a place where all are welcome. As an example, the campus recently conducted training on establishing “safe zones” for members of certain groups.**
- The campus is urged to explore strategies geared toward maximizing opportunities to link the related goals of increasing overall enrollment and recruiting underrepresented/underserved students. **RESPONSE: The WB campus has worked to start new programs that may appeal to underrepresented groups. Its reemphasized athletic recruiting often targets underrepresented groups. And, the campus has emphasized creating the largest possible economic opportunity for prospective students for presentation at Open Houses and other events. The campus will continue to pursue those efforts that will serve the dual purpose.**