

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

Penn State York faces many challenges in attracting new students, including high tuition and fees, aging buildings, lack of student housing, and difficulties adding academic programs. On the other hand, the Campus enjoys some unique advantages that make it attractive to students, including its geographic location, strong community ties, and involved alumni. Penn State York is also notable in its international focus.

In addition to addressing diversity throughout the strategic plan, the Campus provides a narrative response to all seven Challenges in Appendix A. There are noticeable improvements from the previous plan. However the review team would echo comments from the spring 2010 *Framework* feedback report that Penn State York provide more detail on implementation, metrics to assess program success, and evidence of broad and diverse participation across the campus. In general, the review team consistently saw items identified in the earlier plan that were not mentioned in the current plan. Lacking this data, the review team at times found it difficult to identify, and thus assess, information describing the progress made and efforts planned regarding each of the seven Challenges.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- The Campus has instituted a number of initiatives to increase international awareness.
- The 2014–2018 plan reports an increase in diversity programs and the involvement of the student multicultural organization in developing programs for the campus. The next critical step will be to identify how to assess the impact of these programs. ***RESPONSE: In this upcoming academic year, the Diversity Committee will focus on the development and implementation of a standard survey which will be used in all diversity programs. Data collected will be compiled and analyzed for use in future program development.***
- The Campus is commended for successfully securing grants from various sources to fund diversity programs.
- It is unclear if the job responsibilities identified for the multicultural coordinator in Penn State York's response to the 2010–15 feedback report have been assigned to the new part-time international student services coordinator instead. ***RESPONSE: The recently hired international coordinator (initially proposed in the 2010–15 framework) holds a part-time, 30 hour per week position focused on students coming from abroad. The multi-cultural coordinator noted in the 2010–15 report retired and was not initially replaced due to budgetary concerns. We are continuing to look for funding to rehire this position.***
- The diversity committee's intention to raise awareness among faculty, staff and students of "ethnic, religious, sexuality, veterans, and returning adult students issues" through programs indicates a broad definition of diversity and is laudable. ***RESPONSE: One of the ways the campus has distinguished itself has been through the development of programming and practices designed to support the LGBT community and to enhance understanding of these issues within the larger campus community. One example of this type of activity is Safe Zone training for faculty and staff which was recently held (April 2015) with a second training session slated to be offered in August 2015.***

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- Penn State York emphasizes programs to increase social interactions between students, faculty, and staff. The Campus is encouraged to explore ways to assess these programs.
- As a follow up to the 2010–15 diversity strategic plan, the new plan includes results of the 2014 NSSE. The review team was interested in Penn State York's interpretation of these results and how they impact plans moving forward. ***RESPONSE: NSSE implementation terminated in 2010, but the campus has reviewed the content of the 2014 Student Experience Survey, paying particular attention to the questions that addressed how much Penn State has contributed to students developing the following: ability to work with others who think differently; ability to work effectively with others who have a***

different background; and understanding their role in local and global communities. The results from these questions varied, with students' knowledge of their roles in global communities showing the greatest need for more development.

A number of initiatives have been developed to enlarge student understanding in the above areas, including efforts by the international coordinator, faculty working through the Teaching International program, and multicultural performing arts programming facilitated through Student Affairs.

- The Campus is applauded for distributing evaluation/feedback forms following programs and using the results in planning. Similarly, Penn State York's response to feedback in the previous planning cycle identified an assessment tool for diversity programming.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- Penn State York is commended for its longstanding efforts in recruiting and retaining international students.
- The campus' successes in increasing Trustee Scholarship resources for underserved students is to be celebrated.
- The current plan indicates that there are problems with students not taking advantage of outside scholarship resources identified by the student aid office. The review team was interested in better understanding what the office has tried in its efforts to promote these scholarships and what new strategies are under consideration. **RESPONSE: The student aid office currently disseminates outside scholarship information to students via a monthly scholarship newsletter, through referrals to the online York campus scholarship book maintained on www.yk.psu.edu as well as notifying students of the opportunities available on the Office of Student Aid website. In order to inform the appropriate students of scholarships which require specific criteria, the student aid office works with the campus registrar to obtain lists of students who meet the specific criteria. Scholarship information is sent via email to targeted students. In addition, faculty are notified of specific scholarships for which they provide assistance in identifying qualified students.**

In the future, the office will work to modify the website to better highlight scholarships. Financial aid staff will also look for opportunities to involve faculty advisers in the scholarship process.

- The Campus is commended for improving support services for underserved students and student athletes. It is positive that the paired and transition courses appear to help academically struggling students. The Campus is encouraged to track data related to these undertakings. **RESPONSE: The campus has already begun to track outcomes for students in selected paired courses and will continue to do so going forward.**
- The review team would have appreciated more context in order to better understand the two tables presented on page 40: *Retention to Semester 3* and *6-year Graduation Rate*. Analysis of this data may reveal potential priorities for retention remediation. **RESPONSE: The data show a significant difference in the retention and graduation rates for some student populations versus others. To address these issues, a proposal was submitted for a part-time staff member to assist students who identify as domestic minorities, but funding was not and is not currently available. The campus is also implementing a mentor program that pairs a faculty or staff member with an undergraduate leader as mentors for the entirety of the incoming class. This personal guidance from multiple perspectives is aimed at encouraging strong learning skills and a sense of belonging for all students, including those who have not fared well according to the statistics contained in the two tables on page 40. Additional strategies**

for dealing with particular subsets of the student population (e.g. veterans, non-traditional, international) can be found within the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan developed by the campus Enrollment Management Team (EMT) in the 2013–14 academic year.

- If intergroup disparities between underrepresented/underserved student populations and the general student body appear to be an issue, Penn State York is encouraged to find the means by which to better understand and address this.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- That Penn State York follows the established University best practices for hiring a diverse workforce practices is acknowledged. What is being done to support, retain, and provide career advancement opportunities for diverse employees once they are on campus?

RESPONSE: The campus currently does not have a specific plan for career advancement for diverse employees or employees at large. The relatively flat staffing structure of the campus offers little opportunity for advancement for most staff members.

- The previous plan identified some potentially promising activities, including more frequent climate surveys and discussions at the campus senate about ways to evaluate diversity scholarship and research. The outcomes of these initiatives could help shape the new planning cycle.

Education and Scholarship

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

- The Teaching International Initiative launched in 2013–14 is a potential best practice.
- Were the surveys of faculty to assess diversity in the curriculum (from the 2010–15 plan) conducted and if so, what were the findings? *RESPONSE: The Penn State York 2010–15 plan does not appear to contain this initiative, therefore a response is not provided. However, consideration will be given to implementing this in the future.*
- The faculty at Penn State York are to be commended for their efforts to use co-curricular programming to augment the diversity content of their courses.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Faculty involvement in a wide range of diversity-related committees, a number of which are specific to the surrounding community, reflects the Campus' strong local ties.
- It was not possible to assess whether the many positive strategies proposed in the 2010–15 plan were instituted, whether they continued into this planning cycle, or how they are being tracked. *RESPONSE: Senior leadership will systematically follow-up on these initiatives.*

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- Some nominal processes were noted, however structural changes will not be accomplished on this level.