

**Feedback on A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010–15 and
2014–15 through 2018–19 Diversity Initiatives**
Fall 2014
College of Earth and Mineral Sciences

The 2010–15 College of Earth and Mineral Sciences (EMS) diversity strategic plan highlighted the College’s Office of Educational Equity and the creation of the position of associate dean for educational equity to head the office as evidence of EMS’s progress toward its diversity and inclusion goals. The plan acknowledged that more work needed to be done, but “tremendous strides” had been made, and the plan appeared to be an excellent guidepost for EMS’s upcoming diversity endeavors.

The 2015–19 strategic plan for EMS does not mention diversity, or diverse groups, in a particularly integrated fashion. Goal 3 seeks to build a pipeline of excellent underrepresented/underserved students into EMS graduate programs, and the bulk of diversity planning occurs in Appendix B: Diversity Planning. Passages from the 2010–15 plan are repeated in the current strategic plan and project the same goals into the future, giving the false impression that significant progress has not occurred in the interim. On the positive side, the use of metrics and data are a welcome addition to the current plan.

RESPONSE: We agree that this plan is an excellent guidepost for our upcoming diversity endeavors and we look forward to implementing it. While overall tremendous strides have been made, more work remains to be done. In some areas the goals have been changed to reflect the progress we have made, but in some areas, although significant progress has been made, the goals laid out in our past plan are still relevant.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- Adequate staffing (associate dean, director of recruitment, and staff assistant) appears to be in place to promote diversity will rise to the level to a best practice with metrics and assessment.
- The EMS Diversity Council, meeting regularly and representing every constituent group in the College is impressive. With metrics and assessment, this initiative has the potential to become a best practice.
- The First-Year Seminar that includes a section containing a diversity focus, the World in Conversation Project, is an excellent strategy and, with metrics and assessment, a potential best practice. How will students who miss the program (i.e., not entering college as traditional first-year students) have the opportunity to participate? ***RESPONSE: This topic has been extensively discussed within our college and remains an ongoing topic of discussion; currently we have not identified a way to satisfactorily incorporate this opportunity for those who miss the program into our existing course structure.***
- The vision of diversity, located under Challenge 2, would be better situated under this Challenge or the introduction. ***RESPONSE: Vision of diversity discussion moved to Challenge 1 section.***

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- The expansion of the Ryan Family Student Center, which will house the Office of the Associate Dean for Educational Equity, will greatly improve visibility and provide a more effective way to coordinate activities.
- The Office of the Associate Dean for Educational Equity has joined the LGBT network to identify safe and friendly places to discuss LGBT issues. Will other areas in the College be encouraged to do the same? ***RESPONSE: Other areas in the college have identified safe and friendly places to discuss LGBT issues. Plans currently are being developed to renew and expand these commitments.***
- Initiating a Science Diversity event in April 2014 has the potential to rise to the level of a best practice with metrics and assessment to gauge success. At this event, the Department of Geosciences was recognized for its contributions to the College’s diversity efforts through its AfricaArray program.
- An exhaustive list of activities targeting prospective K-12 students, including underrepresented/underserved students, is applauded. What metrics are used to identify success? ***RESPONSE: The number***

of incoming underrepresented/underserved students that enter the college are used to gauge the overall impact of our K-12 outreach.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- The introductory paragraph to this section does not seem to be connected to diversity. **RESPONSE: Text has been edited to clarify that the discovery nature of our majors requires the recruitment efforts of many of our departments engage basic science and engineering undergraduates early in their studies to ensure that underrepresented students are aware of the opportunities for graduate studies within our departments when the time comes for them to apply to graduate school.**
- Data demonstrating meaningful increases in the percentages of students from diverse racial/ethnic groups are noteworthy.
- Figures DP_1 through DP_6 on pages 54-55 are all identical. **RESPONSE: The correct graphs have been added to the latest version.**
- The enrollment of women students is declining. However, no strategies or goals are provided for improvement. **RESPONSE: As noted in our strategic plan, as the EMS undergraduate population has exploded largely into the Department of Energy and Mineral Engineering, it is not too surprising that our percentage of female undergraduates is approaching the College of Engineering percentages. Although this trend appears to be largely driven by the gender demographics of the national engineering undergraduate pool, which has consistently hovered around 20% female, EMS will be taking a complete inventory of our programs and implementing additional programming to support gender equity in our majors.**
- Six “minority-serving” institutions have been added to the EMS partnership list for faculty and departmental engagement to facilitate transition of students from these institutions into the College. With metrics and assessment to substantiate increases in enrollment, this project is a potential best practice.
- The Pre-doctoral Summer Academy’s 9-week orientation, serving as a bridge for underrepresented/underserved graduate students, holds substantial promise. With metrics and assessment to identify success in retention and ultimately graduation, this undertaking could be a best practice.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- A limited number of diverse applicants for faculty, staff, and post-doc positions is noted in the discussion in Appendix B as though this constraint cannot be overcome. However, no discussion is included on the efficacy of the current recruitment methods and the audiences reached. Moreover, strategies to recruit diverse applicants for faculty, staff, and post-doc positions will require specific strategies appropriate to the role. **RESPONSE: As noted in Appendix B, the filling of new faculty, staff, and post-doc positions in EMS with people from minority classes is limited by the small application pools from these classes. While we note a number of our procedures that ensure that every minority applicant is given their best opportunity to successfully navigate the application process, we are working with University partners (Office of Human Resources, Office of Affirmative Action, other academic units) to stay abreast of ongoing developments in methods to increase the number of diverse applicants and to implement these additional ‘best practices’ they are identified. We do not view this as a constraint that cannot be overcome, but rather as an identified current limiting point in the overall process that needs to be addressed now and going forward.**
- Efforts to increase diversity for both faculty and staff have not shown the gains the College had hoped for. What discussions are taking place to find solutions for improvement? EMS is encouraged to continue to monitor metrics, and initiate out-of-the-box planning and follow through that will promote success for this Challenge. **RESPONSE: As noted in our strategic plan, the Office of ADEE will organize meetings between the EMS Office of Human Resources and department/college administrators to address this**

issue, to disseminate information about current programs [Penn State Office of Human Resources programs (Hire Power, Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, Diversity Talent Bank), Commission for Women's staff mentoring program, Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity mentoring program for staff of color, etc.], and to keep abreast of any new initiatives in this arena.

Education and Scholarship

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

- Increasingly more diverse racial/ethnic undergraduate students have received the College's EMSAGE Laureate status upon graduation. This honor is reserved for those students who have demonstrated a substantially higher level of achievement in scholarship, experiential learning, global literacy, and service. What efforts has EMS deployed to foster this increase? **RESPONSE: Potential underrepresented EMSAGE candidates are identified at the end of their freshman year. Staff in the Office of ADEE then works regularly with the students to establish achieving EMSAGE Laureate status as one of their academic goals. Staff helps the student craft and implement an individual plan for obtaining this goal including identifying needed resources, courses, and internship opportunities that are carried out over their time at Penn State.**

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Promising results are noted regarding the number of leadership positions held by underrepresented/underserved faculty, including women, and these outcomes are commendable. Utilizing a table with percentages and raw numbers for current-year comparisons to previous years would be beneficial. **RESPONSE: Noted, we will continue to track and will incorporate the suggestion for utilizing a table in future reports.**
- Regarding the above statement, it is not clear what factors have driven this change. What does EMS attribute these positive results to, and what is being done to sustain them? **RESPONSE: The regular and consistent communication by the dean and reinforced by the associate deans that it is the expected practice of this college to ensure that when vacancies occur, every consideration will be made to be inclusive in the candidate pool.**

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- The Office of the Associate Dean for Educational Equity and the EMS Diversity Council are well-established and, as mentioned above, important diversity structures.
- Results or metrics are not presented related specifically to organizational change.
- Recommendations from the Diversity Council would be helpful. **RESPONSE: Much of the data presented in this appendix was originally generated for presentations to the EMS Diversity Council and was then refined with their recommendations to be presented at EMS Executive Council and department faculty meetings. This iterative process has served our college well, however, the structure of the EMS Diversity Council is currently being modified in an effort to strengthen the role of the Diversity Council in setting the direction of our diversity efforts in the future. One aspect of the change will result in periodic formal written recommendations from the Council, which will in the future directly address this recommendation.**
- The "State of EMS Diversity," a presentation by the associate dean for educational equity each semester to discuss diversity concerns, is an outstanding way to keep diversity at the forefront.
- The 2010–15 plan indicated workshops on diversity best practices would be offered for unit executives. It would be constructive to provide follow-up on this proposed strategy along with metrics and assessment to determine the proposed initiative's success. **RESPONSE: These proposed workshops were not offered during the 2010–15 period.**