

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

The College of Health and Human Development's (HHD) 2010–15 strategic plan is well-written, thorough, and followed Provost Pangborn's planning guidelines. Notable accomplishments include detailed initiatives, such as the successful implementation of a Global Health Minor, creation of an online course on Deaf Culture, and two cluster hires with diversity-related research specialties. Additionally, specific measurable outcomes and focused initiatives highlight the plan. The college cites a number of strategies related to communication and notes that although some activities, such as a college-wide inventory of existing communication, were accomplished, others remain incomplete.

The 2014–19 plan outlines the goals of the previous diversity plan, whether its goals were accomplished, and plans for future ideas and development. The college mentions its "commitment to inclusiveness and diversity," noting that diversity among its students, faculty, and staff is "essential" as it "facilitates our understanding of the cultural implications of issues such as health disparities, poverty, income development, and disabilities." The college proffers an ambitious plan to increase the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff as well as the promotion of new initiatives to further integrate diversity into the curriculum. Moreover, the plan advances a number of specific activities intended to foster a climate of inclusivity and acceptance. The Diversity Task Force should prove useful in implementing and monitoring the success of these endeavors.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- HHD reports minimal progress on achieving "a comprehensive, college-wide communication structure which systematically supports and conveys HHD core diversity values." However, this goal is difficult to assess because the college has not developed a set of strategic indicators to measure progress. Consider building on the successes achieved in this area. **RESPONSE: We agree that this goal is difficult to assess. That is the primary reason why we did not include it in our 2015–19 strategic plan. Our new goals under this challenge focus on insuring that we communicate our understanding of diversity in College materials, activities, and events, allowing us to measure how often this took place.**
- The college has made movement toward empowering "a new generation of leaders and scholars with the knowledge and tools to promote diversity." Enrollments in the Global Health minor have increased, and fifty percent of the students come from areas outside of the college, which are impressive accomplishments.
- The intention to discuss the plan at student, faculty, and staff orientation events is commendable.
- The Distinguished Health Disparities Program, offering an opportunity to stimulate conversation on diversity, is an excellent tool to further the college's goals.
- Consider utilizing the Diversity Task Force to provide guidance on developing a shared and inclusive definition of diversity, including a statement about diversity in the mission statement. **RESPONSE: We believe that our mission and vision statements highlight our commitment to inclusiveness. Those statements went through an extensive vetting process, and we are reluctant to tinker with them at this time. Because our college focuses on health and human development, we have a very broad definition of diversity that reflects populations that are underserved in the U.S. and in other parts of the world. These populations may be defined by age, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, culture, geography (e.g., rural), gender identity, gender orientation, and/or disability.**

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- The plan identifies a robust goal of offering at least one diversity-focused event a month. Assessment and metrics to evaluate the success of these events are encouraged. **RESPONSE: We will count the number of events we offer each year, with the goal of offering at least 8 per year (roughly one per month,**

September through April, when most of our students are here). Where possible we will track attendance, with the goal of increasing attendance over the years of the plan.

- The college should continue to ensure that diversity is visible on the home page.
- Diversity training and a college climate survey will be conducted. How will the success of each initiative be measured? ***RESPONSE: The College indicated in our plan that we would use data from the University's Survey on Values and Ethics and other sources of information to identify what types of diversity training might be needed. In addition, if those sources of information are not comprehensive enough, we indicated that we would consider re-administering our Climate Survey (a costly endeavor). Measures of success will be developed after we determine exactly what diversity-related issues require training programs.***

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- Establishing and implementing a college-wide undergraduate and graduate retention plan was listed as a strategic priority in the last diversity plan. The team recommends continued attentiveness to achieving this goal.
- The Healthy People Penn State Research Conference has been attracting students to Penn State. The collection of data to evaluate the success of this conference is exemplary.
- Continued efforts to focus specifically on the recruitment of diverse graduate students are encouraged.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- The college intends to continue cluster hires to diversify faculty. However, it is not immediately clear how such hires improve diversity. More discussion of this strategy and assessment methods would be useful. ***RESPONSE: For cluster hires, we have been deliberately focusing on topics that are consistent with the College's mission and also resonate with diversity and social justice. For example, in 2008–09, we conducted a small cluster hire in the area of immigrant child and family health; we were able to recruit two very strong faculty members with strong substantive expertise in this area who are also members of underrepresented groups. In 2014–15, we launched a cluster hire in health disparities, a topic at the core of diversity because it focuses on underserved populations. Four of the five searches have been completed; the fifth will continue into next year. Some but not all of the faculty members recruited come from underrepresented groups themselves, but they all focus on underserved populations in their programs of research, and they will teach and, in some cases, develop courses on health disparities. Given their research and teaching foci, we expect their presence on our faculty will signal to underrepresented undergraduate and graduate students and prospective faculty members that HHD is a college that is strongly committed to addressing the health needs of underserved populations.***
- Best practices for hiring a diverse workforce document is planned. How will the efficacy of this document be measured? ***RESPONSE: This is the relevant metric: Increase the diversity of HHD's faculty and staff. Currently 8% of our academic employees and 9% of our staff are from underrepresented groups. The goal is to attain at least 12 % for both groups.***

Education and Scholarship

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

- Progress toward the development of a curriculum that fosters international cultural competencies by starting or expanding partnerships in South Africa, Tanzania, and Senegal is laudable.
- The creation of The Center for Sport Concussion Research and Service to encourage interdisciplinary research toward the prevention and treatment of disabilities is outstanding.

- The Global Health Minor has been successful in introducing diversity into the curriculum. With assessment and metrics this initiative has the potential to be a best practice.
- Creating a diversity matrix to advise students and/or to develop new courses is noteworthy. How will the success of this process be evaluated? **RESPONSE: The matrix will enable us to uncover where we have curricular gaps in the College. After we have identified those gaps, we will direct resources for new course development to those areas, if applicable. One measure of success would be how many of the identifiable gaps get addressed. In addition, as we state in the strategic plan, one of our relevant metrics is:**
Grow the number of diversity-related courses in the college from 40 to 45 (approximately one new course per year).
- The strategy to conduct a diversity inventory in graduate courses is commendable.
- The proposal to build an integrated approach to diversity curricula in undergraduate education and initiate an inventory of diversity content in the graduate curricula for 2014–19 strategic plan is a positive and lofty goal.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- HHD was not able to name a leadership and management team or develop a leadership conference as stated in the 2010–15 diversity plan. Instead, tenured faculty were encouraged to assume leadership positions as they arose. More information regarding staff leadership initiatives would be useful. **RESPONSE: We have created a new structure to address diversity, and the first members of the group have been invited and have agreed to serve. Their work will begin in August 2015. The HHD Diversity Council includes the dean, the two associate deans, two department heads, three faculty members (includes tenure track and fixed term faculty) and a staff member. The goal is to have a high level, strategic group that oversees diversity planning throughout the college in a comprehensive way.**
- The proposal to initiate a leadership development effort with an emphasis on leadership and diversity is sound. A specific description of how success will be measured would be helpful. **RESPONSE: The HHD Diversity Council will lead this effort and focus on developing nominations for leadership development activities on the part of faculty and staff in the College. Our measure of success will be the number of faculty and staff who are successfully nominated and participate in leadership development activities. Ideally, the number will increase over time. Another approach will be that we will take a “snapshot” of the leadership of the College in 2014–15 (e.g., Dean, associate and assistant deans, academic unit heads, research center directors, academic program “professors in charge,” and staff leaders of key College domains such as outreach, research, finance, HR, IT, etc.) and then we will take the same snapshot in the final year of the plan, 2018–19, looking to see if the overall leadership is more diverse, using the indicators of diversity that appear in our definition of diversity.**
- Specific strategies to accomplish growth for diversifying University leadership and management would be beneficial. **RESPONSE: Our response above is relevant to this query, too. In addition, all of the activities in the College that promote faculty and staff development in a sense are relevant here. We want to make sure that our faculty and staff is diverse and that we encourage the existing leadership to be acutely attentive to evidence of leadership potential, particularly in people that would bring diverse perspectives and characteristics to their work. We will underscore the importance of diversity in our conversations in the Executive Committee and elsewhere in the College to try to promote this process. Please note, however, that we have to be guided by other important issues such as best practices in faculty development. We want to make sure, for example, that faculty members have ample time to develop a strong research program because this will become an important foundation for future leadership roles in a research-oriented college such as HHD.**

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- The college did not hold a regular diversity meeting or retreat of all college leadership, including student leaders, with a focus on implementation, as outlined in its 2010–15 diversity plan. Consider making these initiatives a priority during the next planning cycle. **RESPONSE: This will be part of the Diversity Council's charge. We anticipate holding such a retreat in 2016.**
- The college admits that regular reports on diversity activities at Executive Committee meetings have not focused on monitoring implementation and outcomes. This omission is concerning. Periodic evaluation of efforts are necessary components of effective planning. **RESPONSE: We have already developed a tentative schedule for regularly reporting in our biweekly HHD Executive Committee meeting.**
- The plan indicates that strategic indicators and assessment outcomes are being developed. Substantial advancement along these lines is urged.
- Efforts to conduct a diversity retreat with faculty and student leadership that will be used to assess progress for this Challenge is positive.

OVERALL RESPONSE: Thank you for your feedback which we found quite encouraging. We are already beginning to implement some of our plans and look forward to more progress ahead in the coming years.