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

Given the unique interdisciplinary nature of the College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST), its strategic plan highlights the integration of various disciplines that address information technology in an evolving global setting. The people-centered dynamic of the IT field creates organic opportunities for cultural understanding and inclusion and for diversity initiatives to thrive. Diversity and globalization are, therefore, major components of the college's vision, and the plan summarizes key actions to achieve its strategic objectives. The plan also includes a detailed matrix titled, "IST Recommendations and Progress from *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010–15*" (Annex 1, with appendices, Annex 2).

In the current strategic plan, endeavors such as global undergraduate outreach and diversity and equity-sponsored research are unique areas of strength. IST's partnerships with the Center for Innovation in Online Learning (COIL), the Institute of Sustainability, and the Rock Ethics Institute offer avenues for creative diversity programming. The strategic plan sets clear objectives and goals for implementing its matrix system that associates costs with specific diversity goals, a collection of activities, responsible parties, timeframes, measurements, and next steps. These points taken together reflect the high value that IST places on diversity and inclusion.

IST's plan could be strengthened by moving beyond the particulars of activities completed (for instance, headcounts of those who attend individual events) to an in-depth reflection of diversity outcomes, especially as they **advance unit goals toward specific *Framework* Challenges**. The college should develop systems that optimize its two dimensions of diversity (demographic and intellectual) as core values that are reflected in every facet of its operation. Also, IST should consider leveraging its world cultural presence as an impetus to diversify student, faculty, and staff demographics in the college, which would promote diversity infusion across IST. A deeper level of diversity integration along with stronger metrics to support and gauge its diversity narrative will facilitate IST reaching its desired objectives.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
- The college's diversity statement focuses on two dimensions of diversity and displays commitment to the University's statement on anti-discrimination.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
- Conducting periodic climate surveys is a good start, but climate surveys should be guideposts for implementing follow-up processes that will drive climate-related objectives.
- The creation of student focus groups is excellent as a means of gauging climate.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body
- Summer camps for middle and high school students have great potential to diversify the student body and perhaps even contribute to other diversity goals. See the college of education's Scope program as a potential best practice to be used as a guide.
- Targeted programs aimed at increasing the diversity of undergraduate and graduate student populations are laudable (e.g., hiring two recruitment coordinators and developing numerous student scholarships to increase the representation of underrepresented/underserved and women students). Also, the metrics in this area were very helpful.
- Promoting international internships through a corporate associates program has good potential.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce
- The review team was impressed by the five percent increase projected for new diverse hires based on engaging faculty and staff in more robust recruitment and interview processes.
- Working with the senior faculty mentor to support retention of diverse faculty is encouraged and should continue.
- The plan to hire two new tenure track faculty from underrepresented/underserved groups is exemplary, as is providing cost estimates. IST is encouraged to coordinate its efforts with the Affirmative Action Office to ensure that its hiring procedures fall within established University and legal guidelines and best practices.

Education and Scholarship

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters U.S. and International Cultural Competencies
- Diversity and equity-sponsored research (e.g., Modeling IT Career Choices of Persons with Disabilities and the Workshop on Robust Socio-technical Architectures in Support of Displaced Persons) is commendable.
- It is good to use institutional research to help identify intergroup disparities in course outcomes and to better understand those as institutional challenges rather than student deficiencies.
- Using the SRTE to gauge diversity progress in courses would seem to be an effective method.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management
- Plans to place women and underrepresented/underserved men into leadership positions are noteworthy. Coordinated follow up using robust planning techniques will be critical to success.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals
- The new welcome center for Multicultural Affairs will be a useful addition to the Office's infrastructure.
- The goal of finding a solution to institutional policies and procedures that hinder online processes, whether related to students, faculty, or programs (e.g., establishing a promotion path for Multi-Year Fixed Term faculty, which affects climate, inclusion, and the sense of community), shows promise.
- IST's unique global outreach, which places the entire IST undergraduate curriculum online via World Campus and the creation of new Massive Online Open-Source Courses, signals new diversity challenges and opportunities.
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs is a critical structure that should be fully supported to augment its impact. The upcoming hire of the next Assistant Dean for multicultural affairs will be a critical hire for advancing the College's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in each of the 7 Challenge areas and incorporating diversity strategically within the College's priorities.