Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15
Division of Development and Alumni Relations
Spring 2010

The Division of Development and Alumni Relations (DDAR) has adopted the proposed diversity definition from the University Faculty Senate. It states: "Diversity is a concept whereby individuals are recognized, accepted, valued and embraced for their humanity and unique characteristics. These characteristics include, but are not limited to: age, condition of physical and mental ability, educational background, ethnicity, gender, geographic origin, marital status, parental status, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic condition, work experience, and cultural, political, and spiritual belief, practice, and tradition." Elements of this definition are tightly woven and supported throughout this plan; e.g. efforts to increase the number of endowed Trustee Scholarships (for the recruitment and retention of socioeconomically diverse students) and the FastStart mentoring program. The review team encourages DDAR to consider strategies, actions, and events that would reflect this broad definition of diversity and include other underrepresented groups (refer to diversity definition above). The DDAR could consider expanding FastStart to connect with diverse groups such as those with physical and mental ability characteristics, or use it as a model to begin similar programs that reach additional populations. No mention appears of the climate survey to assess "employee satisfaction." No measurable outcomes to assess progress and impact of strategic initiatives are provided under many of the Challenges. The review team recommends identifying appropriate outcome measures to enable ongoing assessment. This will strengthen reporting.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations
Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
- DDAR provides both internally and externally with commendable events such as City Lights, the Gospel Choir, the brown-bag lunch series, summer movies, and book club discussion groups. Absent are metrics to measure impact.
- Currently only 65% of DDAR employees are completing the required minimum four hours of diversity training with a proposed increase to 90% by 2015. The review team recommends yearly benchmarking to attain the goal of 100% compliance prior to 2015.
- The creation of a communications sub-committee to disseminate diversity materials and the creation of a diversity calendar are praiseworthy.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
- Methods recognized for promoting respect and collegiality are: the "buddy" system, the annual retreat to focus on teambuilding, committee participation and structured social time.
- Acknowledged are existing programs that welcome diverse constituents to events. The review team is unclear why these programs are limited to seven chosen campuses. Consider reviewing student demographics at other campuses to see if more campuses might benefit from this notable service.
- Linking specific events/activities with measurable outcomes would be helpful to enable the assessment of impact of individual diversity-related events.

Representation (Access and Success)
Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body
- Raising $100 million for Trustee Scholarships is a meritorious goal.
- The Trustee Scholarships promote diversity by being awarded to socioeconomically diverse undergraduate students, and enable students who may not have been financially able to attend Penn State with the ability to do so. As stewards of these philanthropic efforts, DDAR should consider the benefits of linking scholarship recipients with appropriate academic services to facilitate student success and enable reporting student progress to donors.
- FastStart, a mentoring program that pairs students from underrepresented groups with alumni, may demonstrate a positive effect on student retention, and can be applied to foster other areas of diversity. Absent are measurable outcomes.
- Measuring the impact of the above scholarship and mentoring programs on student retention is suggested as are identifying metrics throughout this Challenge to assess progress and impact.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- According to the *2004-09 Framework to Foster Diversity* final update, 4.4% of DDAR staff self-identified as ethnic minorities, with a benchmark goal of 5.8%- the national average reported to by CASE. The review team questions the 5.8% aspirational goal, and encourages DDAR to consider raising the goal—perhaps using other benchmarks.
- The goal to maintain at least a 60% female representation threshold is favorable.
- Exploring possible internship options for qualified candidates not hired for the diversity internship, fosters a favorable environment for diversity.

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

- The review team invites the Division to recognize its constructive potential in this area - outside of the traditional challenge of curriculum; providing internal/external diversity understanding; providing Alumni travel (U.S. and abroad); educating donors and Alumni.

Institutional Viability and Vitality
Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Requiring search committees to meet with a Human Resource representative at the beginning of the search process to ensure that proper hiring policies are followed is positive.
- The need for diversifying volunteer leadership teams is demonstrated. Increasing the number of females from 165 to 200 will help to increase female representation on campaign committees; however consider representation from underrepresented groups to achieve broader diversity.
- The composition of the Alumni Association Executive Board and Alumni Council in regard to diverse representation "of alumni of color in a proportion that is well ahead of the student body and that are both balanced in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious affiliation and geographic diversity" shows that diversity is optimally defined.
- Diversifying leadership and management is recognizably challenging, yet it is strongly recommended that the Division strive to meet this particular area of need.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- The establishment of "at least 75 endowments that support diversity related initiatives, in addition to Trustee Scholarships" by 2015, is admirable. Clarification of the $50K diversity incentive fund initiative would be helpful (e.g., are these redirected unrestrictive funds to invite/leverage additional funds for diversity related programs?)
- Providing all campaign chairs with a copy of the DDAR *Framework* plan and updates is significant.
- Including campus members on the DDAR Diversity Committee positively encourages collaboration among campuses and units.
- Diversity initiatives should be included as part of a Unit's strategic plan and adding members from the PSSA and the OUD Diversity Committee shows foresight; however it is to be done by 2012. The review team suggests that this goal could be earlier in the implementation cycle.