

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15
Finance and Business
Spring 2010

The Finance and Business (F&B) diversity strategic plan builds upon strengths evident in prior planning efforts. These strengths include the development of many communication formats and feedback mechanisms, such as Web sites, surveys and focus groups. Some of the major challenges noted in implementing the plan revolve around diversifying leadership and management and difficulties in attracting diverse employees to the relatively homogeneous Centre Region. Some points suggested at the mid-term review have been included in the new plan.

The plan could be improved by a better use of metrics that identify outcomes measures for defining success. As it stands right now, the plan mainly consists of an extensive collection of action items. While the plan is certainly ambitious and demonstrates F&B's strong commitment to diversity, it may not be strategic enough. The plan could be construed as more of an "operational" plan that identifies virtually every diversity endeavor that F&B will undertake during the planning period rather than a "strategic" plan. By approaching the plan more strategically, F&B could identify those initiatives that are most important to its diversity goals, identify appropriate performance indicators for these initiatives, and assess the actual impact of these initiatives. The current plan could be an excellent basis for developing a more strategic approach to planning. **RESPONSE: A matrix has already been developed to capture this strategic information. Additionally, the Senior VP for F&B is holding a meeting in October 2010 to: establish priorities for our reported action items, identify appropriate performance indicators and assessments measures. These will be more clearly linked to the F&B Strategic Plan. Invitees include all direct reports to the Senior VP for F&B, the Fostering Diversity Key Initiative (KI) Team as well as F&B's Human Resource Representatives.**

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- F&B is commended for their numerous communication initiatives: it is a truly impressive array of diversity-related Web sites, brochures, posters, etc. However, the focus is almost exclusively on efficiency and access, which are important objectives, but more attention should go towards assessing whether or not these many communication formats contribute to an increased understanding of diversity and/or F&B's diversity goals. Consider expanding focus group topics to cover awareness and attitudes on diversity and F&B's diversity goals within various sub-units. **RESPONSE: Our periodic F&B Diversity Climate Surveys will continue to assess awareness and attitudes on diversity. This is always on the agenda for our various Diversity Focus Groups so that the Senior VP is able to hear their unvarnished comments. "Pulse Surveys" will be considered between the Diversity Climate Surveys.**
- The "mark/tagline" idea is outstanding as a continual reminder of the importance of diversity.
- The senior leadership is exemplary in its active involvement in F&B's diversity endeavors and in holding managers accountable for performance against Unit diversity goals.
- The "dashboard" of strategic indicators is an innovative approach to managing data. Hopefully, it will make diversity data available at leadership's fingertips. The review team recommends consulting with other units that may have already implemented a similar approach so that methods and data can be shared and compared. Tracking outcomes (e.g., how strategic decisions are affected by the new process) could make the "dashboard" a best practice.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- Efforts made to bring in diverse programming as well as to have KI managers at the new employee reception are excellent.
- The review team suggests that F&B encourage their sub-units to follow up on training that has already occurred among individual staff. F&B might need to help remedy the lack of trained facilitators in HR by funding external facilitators. Training interventions that have a positive impact on the entire Unit might be more effective than new hires with diversity expertise. **RESPONSE: As reported, diversity education has been undertaken by each administrative unit within F&B since they can more**

readily assess the needs of their operations and individual staff members and maintain historical records of such education. Central funding will also continue to be used to provide opportunities for the entire F&B operation to experience such events as the John Amaechi sessions. Administrative Unit Heads are encouraged to seek funding from the Senior VP, when needed for professional development opportunities that they are unable to cover.

- The feedback from some employees that diversity has “cost” them personally is important, and F&B is commended for its plans to address this issue through education and awareness.
- The Leadership Centre County effort is noteworthy as a positive leadership opportunity for staff from diverse backgrounds. Consider leveraging the resources of this group to address the community needs of underrepresented/underserved populations. **RESPONSE: The Community Diversity Group was formed by LCC graduates to do exactly this. (F&B employees have served in leadership capacities since its inception.) Information and resources are funneled to the F&B Fostering Diversity KI Team and forwarded throughout the organization’s listservs.**

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- It is difficult to assess planning under this Challenge in the absence of a specific method to gather race/ethnicity data on part-time student employees. F&B must address the coding issue if it is to adequately evaluate its efforts to facilitate retention and graduation of student employees. Do legal or other constraints exist on gathering these data from the University data warehouse? **RESPONSE: Race/ethnicity data is optional on the payroll system’s WAPP form that is used to enter part-time employees into IBIS. Therefore there is incomplete data available in the warehouse and no readily available means to capture diverse student data. F&B will seek alternate measures to collect this data about their student employees.**
- Initiatives to diversify meal offerings and programming in the residence halls and the BJC’s diverse entertainment acts are laudable, as is the achievement in diversifying the residence halls staff, which now stands at 35% of employees from diverse racial/ethnic groups. However, plans for building on these strengths do not seem as robust as they might be.
- Again, the resources of various groups (Leadership Centre County, the chamber of commerce, and the Community Diversity Group) might be useful in highlighting those aspects of the community that could better connect students from diverse groups to the Centre Region.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- F&B’s planning under this Challenge is also difficult to evaluate because no stated targets for diversity in its workforce appear in the plan. F&B does an excellent job of implementing initiatives and examining data for progress and adjustment, but without specific thresholds that define favorable outcomes, it is difficult to know what “success” actually is and whether or not goals are met. Consider utilizing a full set of performance indicators, such as benchmarks, baselines, thresholds for success, and measuring outcomes against these thresholds, on this Challenge and throughout the plan.
- The Diversity Intern Program is a tremendous first start and could become a best practice if data supporting positive outcomes are gathered. **RESPONSE: Appendix 8 reports the outcomes of the internship program since its inception. We consider our results to be positive.**

Education and Scholarship

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

- Not applicable

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Consider reestablishing the connections to HBCUs in order to increase the ranks of diverse administrators and leaders. **RESPONSE: Our past connections with HBCU’s have been to recruit for the Summer Staff Assistant Internship Program. OHR also joined HBCUConnect in 2006 (an online recruitment site); but it did not yield any results.**

- The gains realized from F&B efforts are impressive and include WBE and MBE vendor participation, which has been recognized by the state and, given the supporting data in the appendices, can be considered best practices. Further, gender diversity is now present on the leadership team though racial/ethnic diversity is less apparent, especially at the most senior levels. Also, some data are presented to demonstrate positive outcomes. That said, planning still needs to become a stronger priority, especially in establishing targeted outcomes based on the current profiles. “Continue to . . .” under the performance indicators and other types of general statements do not communicate a strong approach to planning.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- The orientation program covers various aspects of diversity for new employees, and with data supporting positive outcomes it could become a best practice. Again, planning for this initiative is somewhat general.
- This Unit is well poised for coordinating organizational change in diversity. The leadership is committed to diversity and to holding people accountable for substantive goals, good communication networks are present, and successes have been achieved. The Unit is active in the community and promoting diversity outside of its own “territorial” borders. Better outcomes tracking overall could render the F&B approach to Challenge 7 a best practice.