

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15
University Relations
Spring 2010

University Relations has made a fresh start to diversity planning with insight gained from previous work and feedback recommendations. It is exciting to see University Relations taking advantage of this new planning cycle to renew its efforts toward supporting diversity at Penn State, as well as developing a new strategy for moving forward. In particular, the 2010-15 diversity strategic plan demonstrates a greater focus on internal diversity goals that were absent from prior planning cycles and updates. The planned use of focus groups and other input sources to provide additional insight in preparation of upcoming publications is positive. The appointment of the new diversity committee with involvement in planning while serving in an advisory capacity will be important in realizing University Relations' goals. Use of the term "diversity IQ" is a unique and interesting way to market diversity in the Unit and is worth noting. Using a variety of sources for training and information is praiseworthy.

The plan to prioritize workloads to accommodate diversity-related publications and to proactively identify programs that would benefit from the Unit's services is commendable. The review team recommends University Relations include items and assessment criteria to each Challenge which would be useful as the Unit moves forward in achieving diversity goals. Providing baseline data and specific measures for each goal to be able to demonstrate success is essential and should be added throughout the plan. Using the words "may" and "might" regarding potential impact is ambiguous and could demonstrate a lack of commitment toward the goals stated for each Challenge. The size of print used for this document may preclude those with sight impairments from reading the *Framework 2010-15* diversity strategic plan.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- Formation of a standing diversity committee with specific and actionable tasks is positive. Previous updates indicated that a diversity committee had been in place. It will be important to examine barriers to the diversity committee's success so as not to repeat them. Additionally, ensuring there is a diverse representation on the committee has the potential to better inform University Relations of diversity needs.
- University Relations is encouraged to develop a diversity definition early in the planning cycle as Penn State University does not have a formal definition of diversity in place. The Unit's definition will serve as a starting point for internal discussion and education on diversity.
- In updating the *University Editorial Style Manual's* section on diversity, meeting with diverse contacts in addition to CORED and the Affirmative Action Office would help to strengthen revisions and result in broader and more inclusive information being available. Resources to consider include Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity, Commission for Women, Commission for Adult Learners, Office of Disability Services, Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs, and the Opportunity Network for Employment Program which seeks to identify qualified individuals for upcoming position openings.
- The review team recommends developing a target date for the *Editorial Style Manual* diversity section to be updated and a timetable for subsequent review and revision.
- It is commendable that the Unit is expanding feedback on the documents directed to diverse groups using research techniques instead of relying on the feedback of one part-time person or small groups in one isolated geographic region. This approach could be extended to other services and is a potential best practice.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- Gathering input and feedback from various diversity-related groups on campus for a proposed "Climate Report," is applauded.
- Consideration should be made toward using results of the Faculty/Staff Survey as longitudinal assessment data as was indicated in the *Framework 2004-09* final update.
- It was unclear how establishing better correspondence with groups that use free speech zones supports diversity initiatives.

- It may be useful to investigate whether Spanish and English are the only two languages needed for the iHear walking tour. Consider working with the Office of Disability Services to ensure broader access of the tour.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- The practice of identifying noteworthy diverse students and faculty for inclusion in publications is encouraging and could contribute significantly to Penn State's recruitment strategy.
- Use of the FastStart mentoring program is positive. Please explain how the program enriches the Unit.
- Please indicate how the Unit's work is influencing the enumeration of diverse students.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- It is commendable that a plan will be in place for recruitment of a diverse applicant pool should a vacancy occur.
- Focus still appears to be based mostly on gender and race/ethnicity for the Penn State Impact Series. Exceptional researchers who represent additional diverse communities, such as individuals with disabilities, members of the LGBT community, etc. should also be considered.
- It is noteworthy that University Relations' employees volunteer in the many local civic and community organizations listed; however, it is unclear how these experiences contribute to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.
- The review team was not clear how the deeper understanding of students and classroom experiences, which comes from University Relations' staff taking or teaching classes, relates to fostering diversity.

Education and Scholarship

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

- The review team recognizes that academic support units do not have a direct impact on the Penn State curriculum and must find creative ways to support this Challenge. Taking advantage of the opportunity of having liaisons in the Faculty Senate and sharing information on diversity core requirements and offerings throughout the Unit are innovative and potentially useful ways to address this Challenge.
- It is noted that University Relations' staff serve as instructors in a variety of areas. Discussion of the impact these instructors may have in developing curricula that foster US and International cultural competencies by integrating diversity aspects into their courses would be appropriate.
- Measurements to demonstrate the success of the marketing programs would be useful for future campaigns and the clients served.

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Ensuring that existing leadership is supportive of diversity initiatives is important.
- It is positive that University relations demonstrates educational excellence and its employees who seek advanced degrees; however, it was unclear how this support contributes to diversifying leadership and management or the ability of leaders to practice and foster diversity in more meaningful ways.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- Ongoing conversation and education plus outreach to other areas will be necessary in order to successfully implement diversity initiatives.
- It is commendable that diversity information will be included in directors' meetings, all staff meetings and communication's meetings.
- The review team heartily concurs that: "Participation of administrators and directors will be crucial to the success of this plan. The appointment of, and support for, a standing diversity committee in the Unit will be integral to the Unit's ongoing diversity strategic planning and sustained momentum in tackling our goals. But on a more basic level, there must be a philosophical movement."