

**Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan**  
**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15**  
**Penn State New Kensington**  
**Spring 2010**

Penn State New Kensington demonstrates an embedded commitment toward diversity and has made progress in diversity strategic planning since the last update. The overview provided by the chancellor is effective in giving context to the Challenges specific to diversity planning and initiatives. The Town Meeting, held in fall 2009, is noteworthy and could be a best practice. The organization of the plan giving a year-by-year process of implementation is beneficial. The review team found particular strategies worthy of commendation, and potential best practices, particularly in the further development of the “country of focus” initiatives.

Although the definition of diversity at PSNK is broad, and one action item suggests that a “year of diversity” will center on a variety of kinds of diversity, most of the action items only specifically refer to increasing racial/ethnic and international diversity. For example, action items related to disability status, LGBT, and to a lesser degree, age diversity are all but absent. Action items might be reassessed in light of this concern, where appropriate. Action items should be reviewed to ensure that each outcome assessment includes a particular measure and date of proposed achievement. When available, baseline measures should be given to provide context to a strategy. Additionally, when an action item suggests an “increase,” it would be helpful to provide a target percentage that can be set as a measure of progress.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

***Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity***

- The use of a diversity discussion board through ANGEL is an innovative way to encourage ongoing discourse of diversity issues. Perhaps in some cases participation on the discussion board could be made part of the curriculum by including it in course assignments or extra credit.
- Refining diversity programming to meet the particular needs of the Campus as identified in assessment of incoming students’ attitudes is a potential best practice.

***Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate***

- Regarding the presentation of the climate survey, the outcome assessment should give an indication of how an increase in “awareness” will be measured.
- It is commendable to establish interdisciplinary teams to find ways to integrate diversity into the curriculum; this initiative is also relevant to Challenge 5.
- The use of focus groups to elaborate on survey data is encouraging.
- The welcoming center for international students is praiseworthy, but will prove more beneficial if the center is initiated before international students begin to arrive on campus.
- To the degree that using a magnetic swipe card system will help the Campus track the success and usefulness of various programming, safeguards should be in place to insure that the data gathered in the process cannot be misused to stigmatize particular students or in a way that compromises their privacy. Swipe cards could deter some from entering; observational research may be a better approach for gathering attendance data.
- It is commendable to put a cultural series in place to engage the community; however it is unclear how community perceptions will be gauged. Similarly, the outcome assessment of “symposiums will be held” should be more specific.
- It is admirable to integrate cultural diversity even at the level of cuisine served in the cafeteria. An increase in sales of that cuisine, however, may not demonstrate a growing interest in diversity; an additional measure of attitudes is recommended.
- Although faculty and staff will be encouraged to attend diversity conferences, the discussion of implementation and the outcome assessment only mentions faculty.
- It is a potential best practice to feature a nationally recognized diversity expert in new student orientation.

- It is a potential best practice to encourage joint projects between faculty and students at New Kensington and universities in China.

### **Representation (Access and Success)**

#### ***Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body***

- It is not clear why only African American students are aggressively recruited, rather than students of all underrepresented/underserved groups.
- The use of scholarships, mentoring and student housing proposed to recruit international students is commendable.

#### ***Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce***

- A more thorough description of an “international dialogue process” would be helpful.
- It is encouraging and a potential best practice to develop a guide that can serve to assist new hires in acclimating to the area, which will “highlight cultural and diversity assets.”
- It is a potential best practice to include a diversity advocate on staff searches, as well as faculty searches.

### **Education and Scholarship**

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

- More explanation of the international internship that will be integrated into the curriculum would be helpful.
- It is commendable to expose students to a more diverse faculty by using technology to bring them remotely into the classroom.
- It is not clear how students will be encouraged to include foreign language study in programs if it is not a requirement.

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

#### ***Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management***

- The initiatives in this section appear to be relatively vague. A revision of this plan to include additional information is advised, particularly in the language used for outcome assessments.

#### ***Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals***

- The outcome assessment relating to promoting “open dialogues, diverse programs, networks, and resources” is not clear. How will the goal of 15% increase in “campus support” be measured?
- It is a potential best practice to include specific activities on the Faculty Activity Report (FAR) that relate to diversity. Adding diversity awards is also commendable.