

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15
The Dickinson School of Law
Spring 2010

The Dickinson School of Law has made tremendous strides during the past 8 years in terms of its efforts to recruit and admit students from diverse backgrounds. Similar accomplishments have occurred with faculty and staff. The School's plan over the next five years is intended to build on these accomplishments and address what is perceived as "blind spots," which are areas where a lack of attention and vigilance will need additional support and recognition. The review team recommends a more robust use of outcomes metrics throughout the plan to rectify these "blind spots."

Unfortunately, a lack of clarity exists for several Challenges, specifically creating a welcoming campus climate, diversifying leadership and management and coordinating organizational change to support diversity goals. Additionally, the focus of the plan is on gender and race/ethnicity. More planning should be directed to other underrepresented/underserved students, faculty, and staff, which will hopefully manifest itself in the next update. Finally, the team recommends an opening paragraph for each Challenge to provide better context, association and focus for actions and projected outcomes.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- The review team applauds the work of the Diversity Committee, which seems very active (based on number of meetings reported thus far). The appointment of a chair for a 3-year term should provide continuity of diversity efforts and may result in greater accountability.
- The planned appointment of a multicultural officer who will oversee all diversity initiatives at both campuses is noteworthy.
- The review team commends the School for promoting values to incoming students that connect "diversity and professionalism" (e.g., a variety of academic activities that pertain to diversity issues and the law and a written statement on the School's diversity principles).

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- The plan to utilize instruments to assess campus climate, which is slated for completion in spring 2010, is positive. Upcoming updates will benefit from this important information and data.
- The review team looks forward to learning about the progress in implementing a diversity blog and its role to support a welcoming campus climate.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- The continuation of effective strategies, including visits to historically black colleges and universities, letter campaigns to admitted students, inviting admitted students to campus, and the candidate referral service program, are laudable and have resulted in a significant increase in the enrollment of students from diverse racial/ethnic groups.
- Recruiting initiatives for other underrepresented/underserved groups such as persons with disabilities, veterans, and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender individuals are less robust and should be expanded.
- Utilizing findings from a research study on African American attorneys may be useful to recruitment and retention efforts. Effective practices that emerge would be worth sharing in future plans and updates.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- Tracking entry-level tenure-track faculty hires is in place; 12% of faculty candidates were women and one person was from a diverse racial/ethnic group. No data, however, were provided on final hiring outcomes. ***RESPONSE: The statistics cited by the review team are mistaken; their source is a mystery to the law school. In 2005-06, for example, of 29 entry-level tenure track interviews, 20 were women and 12 were people of color; in 2006-07 32 entry-level tenure track candidates***

were interviewed, of whom 11 were women and 16 were people of color; in 2007-08 those numbers were 29, 10 and 4, respectively; in 2008-09 they were 37, 19 and 4 respectively; and in 2009-10 they were 32, 13 and 4 respectively. A March 2009 site review of the law school by the American Bar Association and Association of American Law School reported as follows with respect to faculty diversity: "Approximately 50 percent of the members of the full-time faculty are women. About 15 percent of the full-time faculty members are persons of color. Visitors from under-represented groups have been invited to teach at the law school and this has also served to enhance the diversity of the law school. The dean has also invited several guest lecturers who are persons of color. The faculty departures [including visitors] since 2004 include two black women, one black man, five white women and fourteen white men. Faculty hires during that time period include four black females, four black males, nineteen white women, one Asian female, and twenty-nine white males." The same teams reported that "faculty hires since 2002 constitute a very diverse group who have contributed enormously to the School's efforts to promote an institutional climate that values diversity," and that the law school "has been aggressive in recruiting diverse faculty, students and staff."

- The plan indicates that Dickinson will continue to utilize other University resources for faculty/staff hiring, but specific resources were not cited. Additional details on planned action steps would be helpful. To mention one example, identification of potential employees with disabilities might be facilitated by the Office of Human Resource's Project Opportunity Network for Employment.

Education and Scholarship

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

- Exchanges and interactions between the Law School and School of International Affairs are identified but not clarified beyond listing a few examples. **RESPONSE: The law school and the School of International Affairs offer a combined faculty and curriculum of exceptional depth in international affairs and comparative and cross cultural studies. A visit to the web site of either (law.psu.edu or sia.psu.edu) will clarify the rich array of courses directly relevant to this assertion.**

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- No specific action items are identified for this Challenge during the upcoming planning period. The team finds this absence somewhat disconcerting and recommends that the Law School revisit the plan and identify specific strategies to address this shortcoming in creative ways.
- The selection process for the associate and assistant dean positions occurs through the internal candidate pool search which, as stated in the plan, "further restricts the pool of faculty available for such appointments." In this context, hiring internal applicants from diverse backgrounds will likely be problematic. As long as this process continues without modification, efforts to enhance diversity among leadership and management positions probably will not have a substantial impact.

RESPONSE: These two suggestions are predicated on the mistaken premise that the law school does not conduct external searches for assistant and associate deans. That has never been correct. All assistant dean positions are advertised nationally and appointed from deep and diverse pools of applicants. Only two associate dean positions typically are appointed from internal faculty ranks, and then rotated periodically among faculty. The two positions have been held only by diverse and female colleagues for the past five years, so we are uncertain of the reason for the review team's comments.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- Diversity goals are largely the responsibility of the Diversity Committee. Although a 3-year appointment of a chair is considered an important step in the School's diversity commitment, the review team found it difficult to discern how the committee's work will be evaluated, especially on improving areas that have not to date received sufficient attention. **RESPONSE: Diversity goals at the law school are an institutional responsibility, not simply a committee responsibility.**