

Feedback on the Diversity Strategic Plan
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15
College of Communications
Spring 2010

The College of Communications' 2010-15 plan is presented in table format and therefore requires familiarity with the 2004-09 plan, 2007 mid-term report, and 2004-09 final update for full appreciation of its strengths. Some of the goals in the plan are new; many are described as "ongoing initiatives," with the addition of new action items and new strategic indicators. The review team is pleased to note that all of the goals have been sharpened and are more well-defined than they were in previous planning cycles.

The overall strengths of the plan include (1) an increased clarity of goals, action items, and outcomes that were sometimes implicit or buried in detail and repetition in the former plans and reports, (2) an increased emphasis on training faculty and staff so that they can better understand and carry out the College's diversity initiatives, and (3) an increased effort to track the College's progress on a number of diversity measures.

The College is commended for its broadened view of diversity and is encouraged to keep infusing this view into all areas of its developing diversity culture. Doing so will provide an increased richness in the education and experience of all who work and study in the College.

While the table format is a positive addition for ease of reporting, without metrics to demonstrate progress, it lacks meaningful content. The plan could be significantly strengthened by the addition of outcomes clearly measured against benchmarks and baselines.

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- It is problematic that the College's understanding of diversity is not provided in this section and must instead be inferred.
- The College is commended for its plans to seek more effective methods of providing diversity information to all constituents.
- Including the diversity committee in the assessment of the College's diversity strategic plan is evidence of promoting intergroup relations. What approaches will ensure that the diversity committee itself is representative of all stakeholders?
- It is positive that the multicultural affairs officer is integrally involved in the coordination of College diversity initiatives and goals.
- The goals in this challenge lack indicators of success; identification and use of strategic indicators will help to evaluate progress toward achievement of goals.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- The College plans to use three separate surveys to monitor climate. What benchmarks have been identified for use in the evaluation of survey data? How will the College "assess the effectiveness of responses to climate problems"? For meaningful results, the review team strongly urges disaggregation of the data yielded by the surveys.
- Sponsoring high-visibility diversity lectures, events, and programs is commendable. Tracking the number and descriptions of diversity-themed events, as well as student participation in diversity clubs and organizations, may provide useful information.

Representation (Access and Success)

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- Increasing the number of need-based scholarships for low-income and underrepresented/underserved students demonstrates a commitment to supporting these individuals. What is the benchmark for the increase?
- Infusing internationalization into the curriculum is laudable. What support will be offered to assist students and faculty to study abroad and offer curricular and other academic opportunities?

- What is the support for encouraging student involvement in multicultural organizations and other social activities?
- The College's continued emphasis on monitoring recruitment and retention statistics is commended. The review team notes, however, that the primary focus appears to be on students from racial/ethnic groups. Are efforts in place to increase the recruitment and retention of other underrepresented/underserved populations?

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- Most of the action items for recruitment and retention are clearly presented; it is unclear, however, how the Affirmative Action Office will be used to facilitate the search process to attract "talented and diverse pools and select qualified candidates." Clarification of the role of AAO in this process would be helpful.
- The College is applauded for encouraging employees to take advantage of Penn State's work-life benefits.
- What are the benchmarks for monitoring faculty and staff hire rates for gender and race/ethnicity?
- What are the benchmarks for monitoring faculty promotion and tenure success rates and turnovers?
- What are the benchmarks for monitoring turbulence and turnover rates among staff?

Education and Scholarship

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

- Increasing the number of courses that infuse relevant diversity and international issues, topics, and perspectives into undergraduate and graduate courses is a worthy goal. What are the benchmarks for tracking the number of course selections that infuse diversity?
- Providing opportunities for faculty to enhance their understanding of international cultural scholarship is an apt way to guarantee the quality and quantity of new course material and instruction.
- Increasing students' capacity to understand domestic and international diversity issues and live and work within multicultural and international environments are laudable new goals. What benchmarks and resources to determine the success of these goals have been identified?

Institutional Viability and Vitality

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- Increasing leadership and training opportunities for employees from diverse groups is a worthy goal. What are the benchmarks for the diversity profiles of the College leadership and leadership teams?
- Requiring administrative search committees to choose finalists with "expertise in fostering diversity" will help ensure a diverse pool of candidates as well as sustain momentum toward diversity goals once a hire is made.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- The development of processes that will help sustain momentum throughout the *Framework's* cycle is an admirable goal. What are some of these processes, and who will oversee them? Please elaborate.
- Efforts to establish solid connections between executive-level and department-level diversity planning and implementation are commended. How will communication among all levels be facilitated?
- Collaboration among administrators to share and combine resources for the realization of diversity goals is a commendable strategy.
- What benchmarks have been established to measure progress of the activities listed above?