

**DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN, 2010-15**

**The Dickinson School of Law, Penn State University
February 1, 2010**

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In 2002, barely two years into its merger with Penn State, the Dickinson School of Law embarked on an ambitious campaign to swiftly and systematically establish itself as a world-class unit of the University. The plan was deceptively simple: A top-flight law school must pursue excellence and diversity simultaneously. By investing in personnel, students, and facilities that signal a first-class legal education, meaningful diversity would naturally follow.

Over the past few years, the Law School's pursuit of excellence and diversity has proven a winning strategy. As detailed in the Law School's prior submissions, 2002-09 was an extraordinary period of transformation and growth, restoring Dickinson to its rightful place among the nation's leading law schools while also diversifying its faculty, staff, and student ranks in unprecedented numbers. This twin commitment to excellence and diversity has engendered a quiet revolution of sorts. Today, excellence and diversity are institutional norms that the Law School community embraces: they are *givens*, ideals that permeate and emanate from our work together. Our recent occupancy of our two new buildings in University Park and Carlisle, along with the launching of our revitalized "Penn State Law" website this fall, signals our continued commitment to these deeply-held values.

As we plan for 2010-15 and beyond, the Law School's challenge will be to ensure that the seeds of diversity and excellence sown over the last few years are further cultivated and nurtured. Our planning process will focus specifically on identifying and anticipating possible "blind spots" – areas where a lack of attention and vigilance may lead us to slip. *We want to create effective community structures that will ensure a dedicated, sustained, and focused commitment to the assessment and measurement of our diversity progress.*

The appointment of this year's Law School Diversity Committee has been a positive first step for providing a careful, sustained assessment of where we are on diversity and where we'd like to be. To date, the Committee has met almost weekly since its appointment in September in planning for the 2010-15 cycle. By creating a dedicated ANGEL website that provides relevant data and links to resources, by inviting key members of the law school and university administration and faculty to its open meetings, and by carefully evaluating the Law School's progress under each of the *Framework's* challenges, the Diversity Committee hopes to provide the Dean meaningful feedback in order to ensure that the gains of the last several years continue unabated.

Heeding the University's call for "a more streamlined approach to unit strategic diversity plans, with an emphasis on concrete action plans that are clear and succinct," (*Framework 2010-15*, p. 4), the Law School outlines its strategic plan for 2010-15 in detail below.

Challenge #1 - Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
1. Create meaningful structural oversight of Law School's diversity initiatives and progress	a. Enhance profile of Diversity Committee by appointing Chair to serve a three-year term rather than a single-year term	a. Allows for greater continuity of programming and oversight from year to year.				
	b. Hire college MCO (multi-cultural officer) or create administrative position, consistent with University strategic indicators	b. Provides dedicated administrator to provide professional oversight of all diversity initiatives over two-campus structure				

Challenge #1, continued:

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
2. Incorporate diversity values more directly into first- year student orientation programming	a. More clearly tie diversity to professionalism during orientation	a. Continued inclusion of orientation readings (e.g., assigned cases, like <i>Cunard</i>) and lectures (e.g., Student Bar Assn. President's speech) that highlight diversity competence as part of lawyer's toolkit	a. On-going (the Orientation Committee is a standing committee; two of the current staff members on the Diversity Committee are also members of the Orientation Committee)			
	b. Review current Statement of Professionalism (SOP) that all incoming first-year law students sign during orientation	b. Provides incoming students with clear statement of Law School's values	b. Fall 2009	b. Diversity Cmte. review completed	b. No changes recommended	b. Diversity Committee reviewed SOP and conveyed its affirmation of the current statement to the administration through the Assistant Dean of Student Services

Challenge #1, continued:

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
3. Adopt an inclusive and comprehensive definition of diversity	a. Review Law School's website's definition of diversity	a. Suggest changes as appropriate	a. Fall 2009	a. Diversity Cmte. review completed	a. Suggested changes were conveyed to Assistant Dean of Student Services who accepted them, leading to updated diversity definition on website	
4. Use Diversity Committee as a law school-wide clearing-house for ideas on diversity	a. Hold regular (usu. weekly) meetings open to the general law school community		a. On-going* [*Since this year's Diversity Committee was appointed in September 2009, we have met almost weekly; we plan to continue these regular meetings in the spring]			

Challenge #2 - Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
<p>1. Create and utilize effective instruments for assessing and measuring campus climate, especially given our two-campus structure</p>	<p>a. Develop (1) survey and (2) focus group instruments for collecting data on climate issues</p>	<p>a. More effective monitoring of campus climate issues to better inform diversity programming *</p> <p>[*Collected data may also help with Challenges #1 and #3]</p>	<p>a. Spring 2010</p>	<p>a. Diversity Cmte. and law school are retaining Dr. Rankin (College of Educ.) to design assessment instrument</p>		
<p>2. Continue to value and support programs that promote twin values of diversity and excellence</p>	<p>a. Explore possibility of a law school diversity blog</p>	<p>a. During Fall 2009, committee members have been in touch with Library about collaborating on diversity blogging</p>	<p>a. Mindful that blogging requires constant commitment to updating blog, this issue requires on-going study*</p> <p>[*If successful, this initiative may also be responsive to Challenges #1 and #3]</p>			

Challenge #3 – Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
<p>1. To recruit a diverse and excellent student body</p>	<p>a. Make better use LSAC's candidate referral service b. Employ letter writing and phone calling campaigns to admittees; c. Invite admitted students to campus; d. Continue to enlist faculty and staff to help recruit; e. Review candidate files holistically, following up with candidates for more information as necessary; f. Conduct focus group research g. Establish pipeline projects</p>	<p>a. Sustained improvement in diversity and academic profiles of incoming students</p>	<p>a. On-going (new Admissions Dean Shively is working closely with various Diversity Cmte. members, esp. students)</p>	<p>a. Various recruiting events are planned for Spring 2010, including day-long "pipeline" program in March 2010 for diverse undergrad. applicants</p>		

Challenge #3, continued:

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
2. To retain a diverse and excellent student body	a. Examine mentoring and academic support programs at law school on regular basis	a. Establish sub-committee to (1) study three different types of mentoring relationships: student to student, faculty/staff to student, and alumni to student, and (2) evaluate existing programs and projects and suggest new ones, as appropriate	a. Fall 2009 for establishment of subcommittee with work to continue on on-going basis	a. Subcommittee was created in Fall 2009; their work is on-going (one planned event is to sponsor an alumni panel on diversity workplace issues)		
	b. Monitor developments in current research on attorney pipelines	b. Consider findings from Pratt/Green/Evensen study on African-Am. attorneys	[b. Research is on-going; researchers shared preliminary findings with Diversity Cmte. in Fall 2009.]	b. On-going		

Challenge #4 – Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Workforce

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
1. Continuing to recruit and retain as diverse and excellent a workforce (faculty and staff) as possible	a. Continue to track diversity statistics in entry-level tenure-track hiring (Assn. of Am. Law Schools database allows for this)	a. A more diverse faculty and staff	a. Entry-level faculty hiring typically occurs each fall (and the Law School plans to participate in the AALS process as long as there are faculty slots open)	a. Of the 32 candidates initially interviewed, 10 were invited for callbacks (including 3 women and one African American)		
	b. Continue to utilize other university resources for faculty/staff hiring, as needed					

Challenge #5 – Developing a Curriculum That Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
1. Maintaining a rich and diverse professional curriculum	Discuss current mechanisms and initiatives for curriculum oversight		Fall 2009	Fall 2009		Current structural oversight of the curriculum is handled by the Curriculum Cmte. (a faculty committee with student representation). The Committee reviews proposals for new law courses and recommends them to the full faculty for approval. As the <i>2010-15 Framework</i> acknowledges, the diversity of course offerings depends in large part on the diverse interests of the faculty, so enhancing faculty diversity influences curricular (and co/extra-curricular) offerings. The Cmte. also discussed the role of faculty/student exchanges and interactions between the Law School and SIA, which range from more formal avenues (e.g., joint degree programs, team teaching) to less formal ones (e.g., guest lectures, etc.).

Challenge #6 – Diversifying University Leadership and Management

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
1. Continuing to seek ways to diversify Law School leadership and management	No specific action items				Law School leadership and management actually has been quite diverse for the past five years, although the last rotation of senior leadership positions (Associate Deans and Assistant Dean for Admissions) did not result in as many appointments of people of color or varied ancestry, for the reasons noted in the notes to this challenge. Associate Deans tend to be selected from our internal candidate pool, which further restricts the pool of faculty available for such appointments.	The Diversity Committee noted that while there are currently a significant number of women on the Dean's upper-level management team, there are structural challenges inherent in achieving more racial/ethnic diversity in management (which is something the <i>2010-15 Framework</i> document acknowledges as well). Part of the difficulty in recruiting any faculty (let alone diverse faculty) to administrative work involves finding the right combination of personal willingness and talent to take on these roles; where the law school and university administrators see potential in specific individuals, though, they do encourage both participation in leadership and administrative training programs.

Challenge #7 – Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

Goals	Action Items/Description	Projected Outcomes	Planned Completion Date	Status	Outcomes	Notes
<p>1. Better coordination of diversity initiatives and programs</p>	<p>a. As described in Challenge #1 above, the Diversity Cmte. recommends (1) enhancing the profile of the Diversity Cmte. through the appt. of the Chair for a 3-year term; and (1) appointing a MCO for the Law School.</p> <p>b. The Cmte. also recommends the appointment of Law School Diversity Cmte. members to relevant University Cmtes. on diversity</p>					