

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

Smeal College of Business has an enormous opportunity to educate new generations of underrepresented students as strong leaders. The undergraduate program, MBA program, and Ph.D. program all evidence incorporation of dimensions of diversity in teaching and leadership training. As was clear in the College's 2004-2009 update, though, the focus of this plan remains heavily on race/ethnicity. Increased focus on facets of diversity beyond race/ethnicity will be critical. The 2010-2015 plan is easily read in the grid format, but elements of accountability and agency are lacking. Specifically, it is unclear which unit, committee, department or person is responsible for each initiative. Additionally, metrics are limited, and where reported, lack baselines or benchmarks to provide context. Of equal concern is the reporting of initiatives that are aimed at the entire population (and which contain no diversity-related content) as diversity-focused programs or activities.

The 2010-2015 plan is solid continuation of the initiatives and philosophies reported in the College's 2004-2009 *Framework* update; it has great potential. The addition of specific accountability measures would serve to strengthen the initiatives planned for the next five years.

***RESPONSE: The Smeal College of Business does have an enormous opportunity to educate new generations of underrepresented students, as well as other students. In pursuit of this mission, the College continues to engage in strategic efforts to incorporate diversity into the fabric of the College for the benefit of all stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, administrators, alumni and external partners).***

***The Smeal Diversity Committee appreciates the value in developing a Framework to Foster Diversity Plan for the College. In addition to the Framework, the Committee suggests that a more collaborative relationship be developed with the Office for Educational Equity through an open invitation for a member from that Office to regularly attend the Smeal Diversity Committee meetings.***

### **Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

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

- The College is commended for developing diversity training modules. Assessment of the effectiveness of the training modules should be included in future reports.
- The plan references multiple initiatives designed to promote the "University Faculty Senate's New Definition of Diversity." As units are not expected to adopt the (not yet approved) Senate definition in lieu of their own, the review team strongly urges the College to formulate its own definition of diversity in keeping with the values it embraces for its faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders. ***RESPONSE: The College has developed its own definition of diversity. It is clearly stated on page 1 of the Framework Final Progress Report 2004-09. "Diversity covers a range of attributes, such as race, ethnicity, geography, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, veteran and socio-economic status, and ideas," The College was attempting to be a good team player within the University by referencing the yet to be determined Faculty Senate definition, particularly since it was mentioned in the preparation materials provided by the Office for Educational Equity for this Framework exercise.***
- Establishment of a mentoring program is listed among the initiatives to be undertaken to expand the role of the Diversity Committee. Please provide details about the program. Whom will it target?

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

- Conducting periodic climate surveys is applauded, however, it is unclear whether the College plans to use the University's Faculty/Staff Survey or create its own. The team stresses the importance of gathering College-specific diversity climate data and developing action items based on the issues uncovered in those data.

- The plan states the College's intention to "communicate and get feedback about climate from department unit heads." How will this be accomplished? How will the information gathered be used?
- There still appears to be little programming regarding the LGBTA population. What plans are in place to remedy this situation? **RESPONSE: LGBTA – We have some students who don't care to be identified. The College in general has 1 or 2 students per year who come out. We offer Out in Business – which consists of 3 members, 1 Smeal student and 2 IST students. This has been addressed by the following:**

**Including topic sessions on LGBTA programs at the Striving Toward Awareness and Respect for Tomorrow Conference:**

**START 2008**

- **"Gender and Sexuality Equity in the Workplace", Christian Matheis, LGBTA Student Resource Center, Penn State. Businesses across the country are actively working to establish policies inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity. As a result, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) are finding improved support and opportunities for advancement in various industries. In this session, the facilitator will explore some of the key issues affecting LGBT individuals in the workforce, as well as provide strategies for understanding and affirming sexual orientation.**

**START 2009**

- **"bEYond: Inclusiveness at Ernst & Young" Thompson Harner, Manager, Advisory Services, Ernst & Young LLP. Cultivating a culture of inclusiveness is not just the right thing to do - it is essential to our business strategy.**
- **Workshops have been provided for staff on two occasions with the LGBTA resource center on campus. The first meeting was in response to the Dean's query into how LGBTA can be better served. The LGBTA Office met with the Diversity Committee with the Dean as Chair to provide ideas and suggestions. The second was to meet with the staff to provide a knowledge base for allies and resources that could help students and staff of different orientations.**
- **Establishing relationships with groups such as OSTEM, and Out In IST to bolster student and staff support**
- **Students and staff are alerted to all activities within the LGBTA community via:**
  - **List serves-diversity, student, faculty and staff**
  - **Posters and Fliers placed throughout the building (poster boards on basement, first, and second floors)**
  - **Digital screen displays**
- **The College is also planning various programs like "Straight Talks", student organizations programming on LGBTA issues within their communities (i.e. BMLS' program on Homophobia in the African-American Community") to take place during the academic year.**
- **The College is by nature a conservative place; we will not and cannot force anyone faculty, staff or students to come out if that is not their preference. We will, however, continue to provide resources for those that do.**

***The committee is also proposing the following:***

- ***Distribute gay friendly class listings to all students (example: History 466, Lesbian and Gay History").***
  - ***Ask random students or all students to complete survey on their knowledge of Smeal LBGTQA efforts rather than just those identifying themselves as LBGTQA.***
  - ***Include a brief discussion in freshman seminars about the appropriate things to say (example: not saying "that is so gay")***
  - ***Hold 2 LBGTQA sponsored events each semester (example: LBGTQA lunch with the Dean)***
- The 2004-09 final update notes that student focus groups yielded rich information. What strategies have been developed to address the concerns expressed by students in the focus groups, especially regarding perceived homophobia?

**Representation (Access and Success)**

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

- The College's presence at undergraduate recruitment events is praiseworthy; establishing a goal to measure progress and evaluate success is recommended.
- The Council on Multicultural Organizations is an excellent community-building effort. Details regarding how the included groups work together and support the goals of the University, College and each student organization would be helpful. This could be a best practice that may benefit other units.
- Conference attendance and other initiatives that include sponsorship require financial support. It is unclear how this support will be procured and maintained, vital elements in the sustainability of these services.
- The programs listed in support of recruiting and retaining diverse students focus predominantly on race/ethnicity. Increased efforts to recruit and retain additional underrepresented/underserved groups are recommended.

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

- Taking part in the mentoring program for staff of color, co-sponsored by the Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity, is commendable. Participation in the staff mentoring program sponsored by the Commission for Women is also encouraged.
- A number of events designed for the benefit of all faculty and staff in the College are listed, for example, Forum Lunches, the College's holiday party, the United Way Chili Competition, and receptions for retiring faculty and staff. How do these efforts contribute to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce?
- Potential best practices: Professional development offerings, family/life balance practices, mentoring programs and community events. These initiatives clearly contribute to a welcoming environment for faculty and staff, and should be recognized. If data confirm success, they would be deemed best practices.
- Potential best practice: The implementation of a "Succession Plan Program for leadership progression." With data supporting the effectiveness of this program, this initiative could qualify as a best practice. The team recommends extending this program to academic administrator and administrator positions as well.

**Education and Scholarship**

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

- Diversity in the business world has been an excellent conduit for promoting diversity in other realms of the work world and in education. It is apparent that the College is aware of this and as a result offers many learning opportunities intended to enhance diversity.

- Expansion of “Global Immersion Destinations” is a worthwhile goal, but the singular focus on Africa implies a narrow definition of cultural competence. **RESPONSE: Actually, a destination in Africa would broaden the cultural array of opportunities for our MBA students. Currently, the College has arrangements for Global Immersion in China, India, Chile, the Czech Republic and San Francisco for the international students. In the past, students were able to visit Turkey, Hungary, Singapore, Ireland, Japan, Brazil, and Belgium. Africa has been glaringly absent from this portfolio.**

### **Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- The College is commended for aspiring to establish its own administrative mentoring and fellows programs. Nurturing leadership from within through these programs is notable. The review team looks forward to assessment of their effectiveness at the mid-point review.
- Having the dean act as chair of the College Diversity Committee demonstrates active commitment to diversity goals. Assessment of the effectiveness of this leadership model should be conducted on a regular basis. **RESPONSE: The committee feels that having the dean both contribute and consider a range of ideas and proposals demonstrates leadership and commitment. The dean’s active involvement sends a strong, positive message to the entire Smeal Community.**
- Allowing flexible work schedules so that interested staff members may pursue advanced degrees and participate in other professional development activities is a positive step.

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

- The College is applauded for the diversity at the top level of its administration.
- The plan indicates that metrics corresponding to goals are included in the College’s general strategic plan. Upon review of the strategic plan, however, the location of diversity information and corresponding data was not readily apparent. In future reporting, the team recommends including all relevant data within the diversity strategic plan itself.
- Many of the goals listed for this Challenge directly reflect those stated in *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15*. More explanation would be helpful regarding how diversity is incorporated throughout the “pillars” of the Smeal Strategic Plan, particularly regarding the pillar of “Community with Distinction.”
- How will shifting the budget for the Undergraduate Office of Diversity Programs to the Office of the Dean ensure financial stability? The review team cautions that such a move has potential to disempower the diversity office. **RESPONSE: The Diversity Committee views this shift as a way of securing the budget during uncertain financial times.**

**RESPONSE: Both the Framework Report and the Plan represent the collective work and leadership of the College Diversity Committee. The Committee appreciates the value of this exercise, which has generated several new ideas and initiatives. One key observation mentioned by the review team dealt with the elements of accountability and agency. The College has responded to this concern through the establishment of a Metrics Committee that is responsible for the development of a template that tracks all of the programs and activities associated with the implementation of the College’s Strategic Plan. The Framework to Foster Diversity supports one of the pillars of this plan.**

**The College will also adopt a strategic approach to surveys and focus groups that will gather important information on a wide range of issues from the Smeal Community without inundating the population with multiple requests.**

**When the process started the Diversity Committee invited a representative from the Office of Educational Equity to make a presentation at a Diversity Committee meeting in order to gain insights about the procedure and goals for the Framework. In addition, the Associate Dean for Community continued to keep in contact through telephone conversations and a separate meeting. An early first draft of the Framework Progress Report was also shared. The Committee found this type of ongoing collaboration to be very helpful and would like to see it continued in a more structured way. The**

***committee welcomes advice from the Office of Educational Equity. It would also like for the Office to learn about the unique challenges and strategic efforts that the Smeal College is making in the area of diversity.***

***Diversity comprises an integral component of the Smeal College Strategic Plan. It is a primary focus in the Community with Distinction Pillar where it states as follows:***

***“The goal of the college’s diversity enhancement program is to make diversity a more integral part of Smeal’s curricula, climate, and structure. This will be achieved through increased financial support, student recruitment and retention initiatives, focus groups, curricula integration, faculty and staff appointments, and organizational realignments.”***

***“As a whole, the college has recently undertaken several new initiatives in the diversity, including development a database on underrepresented minority alumni, creating an undergraduate diversity student peer-mentoring program, and forming a tutoring and mentoring program for “change of location” students. “***