Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity
Final Report

The Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, as an advocate for the University's diverse populations, has provided leadership in communicating, developing, implementing and evaluating multicultural initiatives throughout the University. This comprehensive report includes the dual objectives of the Office of Educational Equity's diversity plan: 1) to serve as a catalyst for diversity throughout the University; and 2) to ensure diversity within the unit. Many of the activities with respect to how both objectives area addressed can serve as models for other dual mission units to emulate. Since the 2001 update, the Office of Educational Equity has worked to differentiate its plans and activities with respect to each of these objectives. Additional areas for attention include more supporting data in reporting outcomes and more balanced attention to the many diverse populations served by or supported through the unit. (In cases where primary services are located in another unit (for example LGBTA Student Resource Center under Office of Student Affairs), collaborative relationships and supportive actions could be noted. At present, there is a tendency to over emphasize race/ethnicity and gender and under emphasize other forms of diversity. Closer linkage of the unit's six strategic goals in relation to the seven Challenges of the Framework would be helpful.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
- ❖ Educational Equity is commended for developing a shared emphasis across its sixteen units on "building a welcoming and respectful environment for working and learning that strives to acknowledge, understand, and appreciate differences in personal characteristics, backgrounds and philosophies." However, a clear definition of diversity would support the shared understanding of diversity and facilitate consistent implementation throughout the units, while also serving as a benchmark for other University units.
- ❖ The unit is commended for its internal and University wide efforts to develop education and awareness about all types of diversity. Internal efforts include a unit listserv, regular meetings, and sharing various publications. The review team notes that even given the unit's focus on diversity, it cannot be assumed that climate issues do not arise within the unit. A unit diversity committee would provide a more proactive response to internal climate issues and help to facilitate applying the unit's University-level initiatives within the unit. University wide efforts include a series of publications and electronic media. Information on how often MRC and AAP newsletters are published would be helpful. Attention to accessibility of the Website is notable.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
- ❖ Educational Equity is commended for diversity leadership through such initiatives as crafting *A Framework to Foster Diversity* and organizing the review processes; participation of the Vice Provost on the President's Council; EOPC seed funding for diversity initiatives and pilot programs; Office for Disability Services liaisons at locations away from University Park; and providing staff to work with units on diversity concerns.
- ❖ Within the unit, it is positive that support is provided for professional development activities for staff. Information on the attendance at training programs would be helpful. The unit may consider a more systematic mechanism for addressing climate issues rather than the ad hoc approach described. Involvement of the unit administration in climate concerns is positive.
- ❖ It is positive that the unit cultivates a "family-friendly, inclusive, and equitable work environment that values the advantages inherent in a diverse staff." More information about how this occurs would be helpful.
- ❖ Proactive education and intervention approaches are commendable. Actions include workshops to increase awareness of issues such as race/ethnicity, LGBT, and disabilities; support for launching the LGBTA Support Network and Zero Tolerance for Hate Support Network; diversity videos; and sponsorship and staff support for events such as the Achievement Conference, Touch of Africa, and American Indian powwow.

❖ The Report Hate Web site as a mechanism to identify and initiate immediate response to climate issues and to track incidents of intolerance is a best practice.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

❖ Educational Equity's academic support programs offer many positive actions serving diverse populations including veterans, women, low-income first generation students, multicultural students, women students in science and engineering fields, and students with disabilities. Clarification of Educational Equity's relationship with the Office of Student Affairs in regard to the LGBTA Student Resource Center and any other activities in support of the LGBT population would be helpful.

❖ The unit's extensive counseling and other support services for students are also commended.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

❖ Educational Equity has focused on its success in regard to this Challenge. It is positive that a baseline by which future employment trends will be measured was established after the 2001 incorporation of the AAP programs. Reporting demographic data beyond race/ethnicity and gender (veterans, individuals with disabilities, LGBT individuals) is encouraged. Diversity across the unit is encouraged, beyond stakeholder representation in subunits. Data to support the success of recruitment and retention strategies are necessary.

❖ Partnership with the Eberly College of Science to support postdoctoral students of color is positive. This initiative could be expanded to include postdoctoral positions for additional underrepresented groups.

❖ The Senior Faculty Mentor has been very effective in supporting retention of junior faculty of color. More information on plans to enhance services by developing a network of regional mentors would be helpful. The unit may consider extending Senior Faculty Mentor services to support faculty populations beyond racial/ethnic diversity.

❖ Collaboration with the Office of Human Resources and the Alumni Association to benchmark recruitment and retention strategies within academe and the private sector is positive. More information about this initiative would be helpful.

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Supports the Goals of Our New General Education Plan

❖ Educational Equity is commended for teaching a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses that contribute to the diversity of the curriculum.

❖ The Vice Provost's participation on the Faculty Senate, Senate Council, Academic Leadership Council, and Faculty Senate committee on Curricular Affairs and Undergraduate Education (the committee charged with revising and defining the international/intercultural General Educational (GI) requirement) represents a mechanism for contribution to shaping the University's curriculum.

❖ Indirect contributions through the Commissions are positive (examination of the GI requirement, creation of Gender and Sexuality Studies minor).

❖ The pilot program with College of Agricultural Sciences to analyze diversity content and increase inclusiveness of courses is positive. Support for curricular initiatives such as the Philadelphia Semester of Public Scholarship and Peace Studies is positive. Such initiatives represent tangible and concrete implementation of diversity concepts.

❖ The review team notes that providing seed money to support faculty-based curricular integration initiatives is positive, but ideally these efforts should be supported by the budget of the home College.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

❖ The Administrative Fellows Program, originated through the Commission for Women, has been successful in developing leadership skills for persons from underrepresented groups. Data on participation across all categories of diversity would be helpful.

❖ Educational Equity is encouraged to discuss additional efforts such as leadership and tenure/promotion training provided through the Senior Faculty Mentor.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Educational Equity is commended for conducting a smooth organizational realignment after tripling its organizational size with the addition of the Academic Advancement Programs. Exploring opportunities to address additional needs, such as development, is positive.
- ❖ Restructuring of the Vice Provost's position is also positive.
- ❖ More information on how the unit accomplishes "consistently considering diversity as an integral component to the unit's success" would be helpful. Supporting data would be helpful.
- ❖ Creation of *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State* and implementation of the diversity planning process to establish long-term planning strategies surrounding diversity is a best practice and represents a benchmark for other Universities.