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**< <http://www.equity.psu.edu/framework/updates> >**

**Feedback on Progress Implementing  
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003  
Research and the Graduate School**

Overall, the assessment report is comprehensive and addresses all challenges of the *Framework*. Two units are included in the report: The Graduate School and the Vice President for Research. A detailed report of the Applied Research Laboratory is also included. It appears that progress has been made since the 1999 feedback and 2000 update reports. The Office of Graduate Educational Equity is a focal point for diversity within the Graduate School and is to be commended for its work. However, there are three areas that can be improved with increased members of underrepresented groups: 1) the recruitment and retention of students, 2) the hiring of staff, and 3) in diversifying the leadership and management (other than women). The report from the Applied Research Laboratory appears to have some valuable lessons learned that might benefit the Graduate School. For those colleges whose plans the team reviewed (for example the College of Science and the College of Engineering) where low numbers were reported for minority students, the team encourages greater collaboration with the Graduate School. The committee notes that there was a change in leadership and structure in the unit from the 1999 feedback and the 2000 update reports.

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

- ❖ The *Framework* has been distributed to office/unit directors who are charged to further disseminate and discuss it with their staff.
  
- ❖ It is not clear what “representation” entails in the Research and the Graduate School’s diversity statement.  
*RESPONSE: “Representation” refers to the presence of subpopulations from among typically underrepresented entities, as listed further in that statement. Representation is used because the population of all members of any category is not a logistical possibility, as these exist dispersed across a global community.*
  
- ❖ Numerous approaches are used to communicate an understanding of diversity within the units.
  
- ❖ No diversity committee has been formed within Research and the Graduate School and the one within ARL has been downgraded to ad hoc status.  
*RESPONSE: At the present time, The Vice President/Dean seeks advice on diversity strategies from the Senior Research Staff Committee, the Graduate School Directors’ Committee, and the Human Resources Manager. The Vice President/Dean will appoint a Research and Graduate School Diversity Committee drawing from faculty, staff, students, and technical service employees. The Committee will include members from underrepresented groups.*  
  
*ARL has not consciously downgraded its diversity committee to ad hoc status. It is, however, an all-volunteer group and membership may have waned for any number of reasons. In response to this comment, ARL plans to establish a standing diversity committee with appointment from each major unit of the laboratory. Funding will be provided for service on this committee.*
  
- ❖ Research and the Graduate School staff are reminded of the unit’s commitment to diversity during annual evaluations. No such commitment is evident for ARL  
*RESPONSE: ARL uses the Staff Review and Development Plan (SRDP) provided by the Office of Human Resources to rate diversity performance of the staff. A CORED subcommittee, chaired by Pat Hayes, ARL’s half-time diversity program coordinator, has recommended to Dr.*

*Billie Willits a revision of the SRDP form to include Diversity as a Unit-Specific Factor. ARL's faculty diversity performance is also reviewed during their annual evaluation.*

- ❖ A new staff program has been expanded to a full day and diversity is a major focus.
- ❖ University editor representatives review all unit publications so they contribute appropriately to diversity initiatives.
- ❖ ARL has committed a half-time position to coordinate its diversity efforts.

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

- ❖ The Graduate School has committed over \$1.7 million to numerous diversity efforts.
- ❖ ARL's diversity committee has gone through several iterations and evolved into a "World Class Employer Committee" charged to examine climate issues.  
*RESPONSE: The World Class Employer Committee has completed its survey and the results will be available on the Penn State website. The overwhelming majority indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with ARL as an employer.*
- ❖ Several notable social activities are conducted by ARL to acclimate student interns and visiting faculty.
- ❖ An ad hoc committee on minority recruitment and retention was created by the Dean to become more aggressive in graduate education.
- ❖ The climate survey was completed with such a low response rate that the findings could not be generalized.
- ❖ The Office of Graduate Educational Equity and the Dean initiated an annual "Discussion of Inclusiveness".
- ❖ Various climate activities are conducted through the Commission for Women.

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

- ❖ The Graduate School has expended considerable effort and resources to address prior recommendations about student recruitment and retention.
- ❖ The Graduate Equity Office provides effective service across the University.
- ❖ ARL has been effective in providing resources and programming to recruit and retain underrepresented students for various graduate programs.
- ❖ The Graduate School is hosting the National Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) Conference for underrepresented minorities.
- ❖ Even with the above efforts, however, over the last five years there was a decrease in the number of Hispanic and Native American students and an increase of only 27 African American graduate students (8%).
- ❖ These enrollment figures suggest a disconnect between the expected results and the resources and programming being provided. Thus, more effort is needed to link the resources and programming to desired outcomes.

*RESPONSE: An important distinction that must be recognized is that the Graduate School, unlike other academic colleges, does not have faculty lines, and does not directly control academic decisions to accept any applicant into an academic program. These decisions are made at the graduate program level within colleges. The Graduate School can only (and does) provide guidance, incentives (within available resources), and leadership through university-wide dialogue and forums (e.g., the annual Discussion of Inclusiveness in Graduate Education), and through programs of the Office of Graduate Educational Equity (OGEE), such as SROP and Graduate Visitation Day). For its part, the Graduate School has been extremely active in its efforts to promote the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body by colleges.*

*The goals and recommendations contained in the report are new initiative. The Fall 2000 data do not reflect these approaches. We are optimistic that these new initiatives will support an increase in the number of underrepresented students.*

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

- ❖ The comparative data between Fall 1997 and Fall 2000 shows no growth in the number of females and minority academic administrators, a slight increase in the number of female faculty at the research assistant level and a decrease in the number of minority group faculty. The staff data indicates an increase of one female and no change in the number of minority staff.

*RESPONSE: Academic administrator numbers for these units includes Great Valley and the Applied Research Laboratory. The Research and Graduate School academic administrators are drawn from the colleges' faculty ranks. Our central office, consortia, and institute directors are currently comprised of six white males and five white females.*

*Although the Research and Graduate School data from the Fall of 1997 and 2000 indicate a decrease in underrepresented staff, we have documented data that indicate our numbers in 2002 have risen by 62% (13 to 21).*

- ❖ There are no specific recruitment strategies with documented evidence of success.  
*RESPONSE: The Research and Graduate School Diversity Committee will be charged with identifying staff recruitment initiatives.*
- ❖ Noteworthy efforts to retain staff include flexible scheduling to encourage a “family friendly” work environment. An awards program, release time to serve on committees, staff development and involvement in the professional organizations are also noted. However, the efforts are descriptive without clear evidence that these strategies work, especially with underrepresented groups.  
*RESPONSE: Telecommuting was implemented for two (1 Asian female and 1 white female) key staff following the birth of their children. The arrangement allowed them to stay at home while at the same time conducting work via e-mail. Both arrangements were extremely successful.*
- ❖ The ARL realized its efforts to recruit were unsuccessful and developed new initiatives that might prove more successful in time.

**Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum that Supports the Goals of our New General Education Plan**

- ❖ Curricula support is based on research and graduate activities.
- ❖ Six interdisciplinary research programs support curriculum through their wide range of activities, e.g., courses, financial support, institutes, seminars, faculty hires, PSU Press publications, partnerships, and technical assistance, etc.
- ❖ Specific curriculum development efforts are limited or are not applicable to the unit.

*RESPONSE: Curriculum development is not applicable to these units.*

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

- ❖ Women are strongly represented in leadership and management roles in the Graduate School and in other units administered by the Vice President Research and Dean of the Graduate School. Four of the five Graduate School Directors are women.

*RESPONSE: Since the staff data were collected in the Fall of 2000, we have promoted or hired five females including one administrative fellow into technology transfer leadership positions; grades range from 26-29. In the past, it has been extremely difficult to hire women into technology transfer leadership roles simply because the pool was so small.*

- ❖ Members of other underrepresented groups are generally lacking, with the exception of the Director, Office of Graduate Educational Equity.

*RESPONSE: Again, since the Fall 2000 data, we have promoted one Hispanic male to a grade 28 and transferred one Hispanic male to a leadership role with the Marine Corps Research University.*

Specific strategies to develop approaches to diversify leadership and management from underrepresented groups other than women (or women who also represent other underrepresented groups) are missing.

*RESPONSE: Since the Graduate School is a positive and supportive work environment, management positions turn over very slowly (e.g., three of the five Directors average 16 years of service in their positions), making changes in representation untenable until such turnover occurs. Of the remaining two that have either been created or turned over more recently, the Director of the OGEE is a female member of another underrepresented group, as was noted.*

*The Vice President/Dean will charge the Diversity Committee with the task for developing approaches to diversify leadership and management from underrepresented groups.*

**Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support our Diversity Goals**

- ❖ Four examples of organizational change are given: 1) a database and an on-line system to track McNair, CIC, and International graduate applicants, 2) disability guidelines for academic units, 3) formal agreements with the United Negro College Fund and others, and 4) the dissemination of diversity related funding opportunities.
- ❖ Although noteworthy, the changes seem to address resource mobilization and allocation strategies rather than organizational realignments, systems of accountability or long-term planning strategies.

*RESPONSE: Here again, it must be recognized that the Graduate School has no line oversight of colleges, and therefore cannot effect organizational realignments or dictate accountability within colleges to impact on diversity in graduate education. What steps can and have been taken are to more proactively impact the recruitment process of colleges by having the OGEE solicit and physically bring prospective students of color to the Penn State campus to visit and explore graduate opportunities with their programs of interest (Graduate School Visitation Day). This approach directly addresses a critical step in recruiting students by providing a personal interaction and experience. For programs that have been less aggressive in seeking out and bringing students of color to campus for recruitment visits, the OGEE is serving as a functional, university-wide broker to ensure that such face-to-face opportunities occur. Similarly, one of the most effective recruitment strategies possible is to provide a research opportunity for a prospective student in the scholarly environment of their discipline of interest, prior to their formal phase of seeking a graduate program at a specific institution. SROP provides this opportunity, and the OGEE again serves as the broker, on a university-*

*wide basis. This particular approach is more long-range, in that it targets prospective students primarily in the junior year of their baccalaureate degree program.*

*The Vice President/Dean will charge the Diversity Committee with identifying organizational realignments, systems of accountability, and long-term planning strategies to support the University's diversity goals.*

- ❖ The ARL hired a half-time position in minority recruitment and to oversee diversity programs.
- ❖ It is not clear how the Office of Graduate Education Equity is structured or how it functions in relation to other offices in the unit.

**RESPONSE:** *The OGEE is headed by a Director, who dually reports to the Dean/Vice President and Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School, and staffed with two, full time support staff in standing appointments. These positions are supplemented by graduate student interns who assist in coordinating and implementing the various programs of the office, in particular the SROP program. This office has, as its primary client base, the academic colleges and both prospective and currently matriculating graduate students. Other offices in the Graduate School provide support to the OGEE in a variety of ways, including computer support and services (Data Systems and Analysis), publicity and editorial services (Alumni and Public Relations), and financial and enrollment services (Fellowships and Awards, and Graduate Enrollment Services, respectively). The OGEE in turn is a resource for these other offices regarding matters of educational equity that may surface in the normal operations of these offices. For example, a student of color visiting the Office of Fellowships and Awards may indicate their interest in attending a professional meeting that is not feasible due to limited resources within their academic program. The office of Fellowships and Awards would direct the student to the OGEE for support for such an effort.*