Before you read the feedback and report revisions, you are strongly encouraged to review the Overview, History and Calendar Web page at

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

Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
School of Information Sciences and Technology

As indicated in the 1998 strategic plan update, diversity is built into the basic values of the Unit, and this new unit is being built with explicit diversity goals and strategies. The Review Team has noted throughout that proactive diversity strategies regarding women should be expanded to encompass all underrepresented groups.
RESPONSE: IST's emphasis on diversity strategies that focus on women should not be viewed as zero-sum priority. We also feel strongly that strategies and expectations of diversity encompass all underrepresented groups. How that vision becomes implemented plan is a priority for the end-of-semester diversity planning meeting wherein 2002-03 goals are articulated.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The definition of diversity is very inclusive, and consistently used throughout the report. Including additional information and data will help support the definition.
- ❖ Information regarding diversity and the importance of diversity within the Unit's values is broadly distributed in several formats. While this is commendable, in addition to distributing information, more attention could be given to providing guidance in how the information can be used in the classroom and other settings.
  RESPONSE: Our IST course curriculum is still new. We have just begun to insert additional dimensions into many of the classes. Dr. Larry Spence, director of undergraduate learning initiatives, works with our faculty members to inject diversity case study problems into our curriculum to help them with diversity-oriented discussion in our classrooms. This is especially true of our First-Year Seminar where we use the subject of the "Digital Divide" (i.e., the inequities of information technology access in our society) as the core of the major team project of PSU 017.

- ❖ One would question whether the statement "we feel that the ethnic, gender, and intellectual diversification of our faculty has been a hallmark of IST" (p. 7) would really reflect a hallmark without the significant presence of Latino and black faculty.
  RESPONSE: With the additions of Drs. Lynette Kvasny and Brian Smith (African American) and Dr. Frederico Fonseca (Brazilian) we have a both an African American and Latino presence in our relatively small faculty (eighteen tenure-track individuals at present). Recruiting individuals of underrepresented groups for our faculty has been and continues to be a top priority, as it has in the recruitment of graduate students. Five African American students have joined our student ranks so that 22 percent of our graduate students are now African American. The IST administration is emphatic in articulating that this is a critical ingredient in our community. Furthermore, in a field that historically has been dominated by white males, the percentage of females in the IST faculty (27 percent) equals that of white males. A significant achievement in the school's brief three-year history. We have shattered all baselines in our field for underrepresented and gender enrollments in our student body and recruiting in our faculty with incredibly hard work and persistence. Yes, we do consider it a hallmark and stand by the statement.

- ❖ It is positive that the role of the multicultural coordinator is not limited to student concerns.
- ❖ The diversity committee is well constituted, works closely with the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, and has direct access to the dean. The School should include examples of what the diversity committee has accomplished.

School of Information Sciences and Technology

> *RESPONSE: Still in its first year, the IST diversity committee is young. Our major accomplishment this year was writing the IST Framework for Diversity: Progress, Challenges, and Direction document that was completed in December. The balanced committee representation has allowed for two incidents to be handled by faculty and staff within the committee. These incidents were addressed and handled through the committee while keeping the matter within policy and confidential. Our last meeting of this academic year is in May, and we plan on having Dr. Annette Bookter at the meeting to facilitate goal setting for next year.*

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

❖ The School is commended on use of WIST and WISE as part of creating a welcoming climate for women. The School should indicate any strategies for creating a welcoming climate for additional diverse groups.
> *RESPONSE: As our diversity strategies become realized, we will be able to create new support groups and organizations. In the interim, we have initiated the creation of a CORED type organization modeled after the University's Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity (CORED). The IST Undergraduate Programs office has a mentor program where sophomores and juniors are paired up with incoming first-year students. To help support a welcoming environment two of our staff employees are currently members of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Support Network, while one of our senior faculty members and a member of this committee are members of the University's Commission On Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equity (CLGBTE) committee. Furthermore, consideration is being given to including a course on diversity in the professional development requirements for all staff members.*

❖ Undertaking a climate survey of faculty and staff is commendable. It should be noted that since only one respondent was non-white, and only one respondent was non-heterosexual, the results of the survey might not be an accurate representation of climate as experienced by individuals from underrepresented groups.
> *RESPONSE: Since the survey was completed two years ago, several things have changed. In the past year, three women have joined our faculty, significantly improving the chemistry of our overall community. Since one of these individuals is a Black American and another is non-heterosexual, the mix will be more broadly representative when the next survey is done next academic year.*

❖ It is commendable that the dean shows leadership in being actively involved in responding to climate issues and follow-up to the climate survey.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

❖ The School is pursuing an array of creative and proactive strategies for recruiting students from underrepresented groups, especially considering the size and infrastructure of this new School. Collaboration with other units is a potential "best practice," as is outreach to families of prospective students.
❖ Gender is equally balanced among graduate students. In recruiting graduate students, the School is encouraged to target U.S. underrepresented ethnic populations.
> *RESPONSE: Last year, over 60 percent of our graduate students were Asian. This year, the dean charged the search committee to better balance the recruitment process with underrepresented ethnic populations (Hispanic, Native American and Black females). We are pleased to report that we have acceptances for our Ph.D. program from five African Americans, three of whom are female. We hope to connect with KPMG (accounting consulting group) to network with an established fellowship program for underrepresented U.S. groups.*

❖ In discussing the impact of WIST on retention, the School might wish to consider including information on the ethnicity of WIST participants and leadership.
RESPONSE: We will plan on doing this and will distribute the information to all students and new first-year students entering this fall.

❖ Clarify what is meant by the statement "we have structured the candidacy examination also to be developmental in terms of social and cultural assimilation."
RESPONSE: IST is a truly a multidisciplinary academic unit. It is anticipated that our students will come from diverse intellectual, cultural, and social backgrounds. The intent of the candidacy exam is to assess student's progress and plans towards Ph.D. study and research. Hence, our examination process focuses on asking the students to articulate their multi-disciplinary research focus and plans for subsequent study. The examination process (comprising both a written and oral component) strives to be both evaluative and instructive for the students. Hence, the candidacy exam is a component in a continuing development process for the students. It is designed to assist students in thinking about and understanding how their own personal background and research interests fit into a larger context of IST (which is a multi-disciplinary, multicultural intellectual discipline).

We will use this revised language in the report to clarify the intention of the statement.

❖ School involvement with Pennsylvania Governor's School for Information and technology is commendable. It is also commendable that the School intends to use its success in recruiting women students as a model for recruiting other underrepresented groups.
RESPONSE: Dr. Eileen Trauth and Dr. Lynette Kvasny are working on major research projects on women students and underrepresented groups as they relate to the field of information technology. Two new National Science Foundation (NSF) sponsored research grants totaling nearly $850,000, will greatly aid us in our gender recruitment efforts.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce
❖ It is positive that the diversity coordinator serves on search teams. As the School grows, the diversity coordinator's continued membership on search committees is important for reasons of oversight, accountability, and constancy.
RESPONSE: It is planned that the diversity coordinator continues to stay involved in all searches.

❖ Understandably, recruiting faculty has been the primary focus for this new School. However, now is the time to develop retention strategies for underrepresented faculty.

RESPONSE: Initiated this past fall, IST has started a faculty mentoring process to strengthen the relationship between senior and junior members of the faculty and head off problems and strengthen relationships.

Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Supports the Goals of Our New General Education Plan
❖ It is positive that the School includes diversity issues throughout its curriculum. Further documentation of this should be provided (list of courses with brief descriptions).
RESPONSE: The following is now included:

> *In the Introduction to Information Sciences and Technology (IST 110) course, students are introduced to information systems including social implications, and the creation, organization, analysis, storage, retrieval, and communication of information. In particular, this course requires students to examine the subject of women's involvement in the technology field and the social issues driven by a digital economy.*
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> *In PSU 017 (First Year Seminar) the purpose of this course is to help you to learn how to be successful in the School of Information Sciences and Technology (IST) at Penn State University. This involves two elements. The first is learning how to be successful in college, in general. The second is learning what the field of information sciences and technology is all about and what is expected of you in the School of IST. In this course we will address both elements of success. Through lectures, class discussions, assignments and guest presentations you will learn what it takes to be successful in college. Through a group project you will learn what IST is about, and the learning formats that you will encounter in IST courses. This course includes a team project on the impact of technology on society including the implications of the "Digital Divide."*

❖ The attempt to incorporate diversity in the First Year Seminar is commendable; however, the practice does not seem to be systematic. It is noted in the response to Challenge 1, Question 2 that "most instructors of PSU 17 and IST 110 (the introductory course for all IST students) require students to examine the subject of women's involvement in the information technology field"; this practice should be extended to all sections of the First Year Seminar and introductory course to include consideration to all underrepresented populations.
RESPONSE: All sections of the IST First-year Seminar (PSU 017), were restructured for spring 2002 to include a team project on the impact of technology on the Digital Divide. This, along with discussions and research on women's involvement in technology, are involved in every section of the first-year student seminar by all instructors. We agree that it is important that IST 110 be treated in the same manner.

❖ Faculty research on gender and racial issues in the information technology field is promising.
RESPONSE: Two IST faculty members have made some significant progress in being recognized by National Science Foundation (NSF) for two major grants totaling over $850,000. The subjects of this significant research are "Field Study of Individual Differences in the Social Shaping of Gender in IT" and "Women in the IT Workforce: How Level is the Playing Field?"

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management
❖ Staff seem to be well supported in professional development.
❖ Asians do not appear to be underrepresented in the information science and technology field; therefore the sentence regarding search committee chairs should be reworded to read: "Of the five search committee chairs, two are women and two are Asian."
RESPONSE: We agree this was unclear, and have made changes on page 16.

❖ While encouraging "exposure to diversity-promoting activities" for the personal growth of all employees is a positive action, the School should indicate how members of underrepresented groups are targeted for leadership opportunities.
RESPONSE: The IST administration, in conjunction with the mentoring program, has placed a Black American female faculty member as the faculty adviser for Women in Science and Technology (WIST) while at the same time have placed our senior female faculty in the role of

Ph.D. Graduate Adviser for the program.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The School is commended for proactively building a system for diversity as it builds the organization. The set of strategies to accomplish the College's four specified objectives demonstrate important concrete efforts to meet this challenge.
- ❖ Mandatory diversity education is a positive strategy.
- ❖ The School should re-examine bullet 3 under Objective 3 for possible misinterpretation. Since it is assumed that the School will act within the bounds of the law, the following wording may be more effective: "IST will vigorously pursue race/national origin and gender-conscious hiring."
  RESPONSE: We agree that this was confusing, and have made changes on page 18.

- ❖ Beyond compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, additional proactive measures for retaining an inclusive workforce should be clarified.
  RESPONSE: Through the IST Office of Human Resources and the diversity coordinator, a mentorship will be set up to closely monitor progress, comfort level, and personal development in an effort to stay on top of any concerns.