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**Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
Office of Undergraduate Education**

The responsibilities of the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) span the University through student enrollment in DUS, leadership for curriculum development, and specialized programmatic offerings via ROTC and Academic Assistance Programs (AAP). Such broad responsibilities provide the opportunity to influence both the substance and delivery of Penn State's messages about diversity.

OUE appears to have a number of excellent initiatives in place to highlight the University's diversity focus. The progress assessment report could be strengthened considerably by consistently showing the relationship between these initiatives and explicit OUE diversity goals. It would also be useful to distinguish between the OUE role at University Park and at other campus locations. OUE is to be commended for sponsoring programs and activities on LGBT issues, but the unit should develop an explicit definition of diversity that is inclusive of LGBT and other diversity constituents. Finally, the report notes that as of July 1, 2001, AAP was no longer a part of OUE. Since AAP was a significant component of OUE's diversity agenda, the assessment review team recommends some discussion about how OUE plans to continue its emphasis on diversity without AAP. Comments on the report under each Challenge follow:

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The report references respected scholars in defining distinct concepts of multicultural and global education. Good attempts are made to tie these concepts to the OUE charge, but the team could not identify the exact OUE definition of diversity. The report should make this definition explicit and inclusive (i.e., disabilities, sexual orientation, etc.)
RESPONSE: *(See pg. 5, 6 in final report).*
- ❖ The report asserts that diversity messages are communicated via FTCAP, ROTC communications, the First-Year Seminar module for student athletes, and CELT luncheons for faculty. However, the lack of specific information, including assessment results, makes it difficult to understand the nature of these initiatives
RESPONSE: *(See pg.7, 8 in final report).*
- ❖ The report states that the "OUE Diversity Enhancement Team provides numerous activities and programs for unit members." Does the Team have a role among the broader University community? Information about the February 2002 program sponsored by the Team should be updated in the final assessment report
RESPONSE: *(See pg. 8, 9 in final report and Appendices A, B).*
- ❖ OUE programs are among the most significant diversity events at the University. The partnerships with community organizations are best practices. It would be helpful to have more information on the total number of programs sponsored, what types of activities occurred at the programs, and some information about the participants
RESPONSE: *(See pg. 9, 10 in final report).*

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ OUE's ongoing responsibilities include FTCAP, *Preface*, and LEAP. While OUE deserves credit for its leadership in developing the Pre-Freshman Seminars focusing on diversity, more opportunities exist for special efforts through these ongoing programs. Also, many programs are in place for first-year students, but no description of similar programs for change-of-assignment or transfer students appears in the report
RESPONSE (See pg. 8, 11, 12, 14 in final report). Does OUE have any initiatives for these students that include diversity programming? **RESPONSE:** *(See pg. 7 in final report).*

- ❖ The FYS Best Practices Conference is, itself, a “best practice.”
- ❖ The description of the on-line climate survey would be strengthened by including some discussion of any processes planned for review and dissemination of the results and for developing follow-up strategies **RESPONSE: (See pg. 8, 9 in final report and Appendices A, B).** Also, the report does not provide an update on the 1998 plans for a “multifaceted climate assessment process,” which encompasses Penn State students, faculty, and staff. The on-line survey appears to be only for OUE staff. **RESPONSE: (See pg. 9, 10 in final report).**
- ❖ While pride in the “open nature” of OUE may be merited, the availability of formal procedures for identifying climate issues within the unit could help individuals feel welcome to come forward with any concerns. Does an appropriate role exist for the Diversity Enhancement Team in responding to climate issues? **RESPONSE: (See pg. 15, 16 in final report).**

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ AAP units provide excellent retention programs for targeted groups of students.
- ❖ The data describe overall University enrollment numbers. The OUE story could be told in a much more compelling way if these numbers were related to retention data for AAP enrollees **RESPONSE: (See pg. 17, 18 in final report).**
- ❖ Six ongoing retention initiatives are noted as successful efforts. It would be helpful to provide some details to strengthen this assertion **RESPONSE: (See pg. 17 in final report).**
- ❖ Details about the six-year OUE retention effort at the campuses would strengthen this report considerably **RESPONSE: (See Appendix C).**

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ While there appears to be a reasonable presence of women and employees from diverse racial/ethnic groups in OUE, including specific data in the report would be very helpful **RESPONSE: (See pg. 20, 21 in final report).**
- ❖ The report indicates that OUE has had a small number of vacancies in recent years **RESPONSE: (See pg. 20 in final report).** The report goes on to suggest that this low turnover relates to a supportive climate for diversity in the unit, though no evidence is provided to substantiate such a belief **RESPONSE: (See pg. 20, 21 in final report).**
- ❖ No formal plan appears to be in place for addressing recruitment strategies and search committee procedures. Networking is a good start, but formal processes need to augment informal efforts. Given the upcoming change in OUE leadership and the loss of AAP, which constituted much of OUE’s workforce diversity, explicit plans for developing new recruiting methods that will enhance the diversity of OUE are called for **RESPONSE: (See pg. 20, 21 in final report).**

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

- ❖ OUE plays a leadership role through the participation of the vice provost and other OUE employees on relevant Faculty Senate Committees. The report would be strengthened by an explanation of the ways in which these individuals attempt to influence discussions concerning diversity **RESPONSE: (See pg. 22, 23, 24 in final report).**
- ❖ OUE is to be commended for funding several courses and teaching initiatives that have significant diversity content. Does OUE have any processes that encourage these curricular innovations? If so, description of any processes or special incentives for these activities would enhance the report **RESPONSE: (See pg. 23, 24 in final report).**

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Other than citing two examples of leadership training opportunities for women employees, the report gives no evidence that a formal plan is in place to position employees from diverse groups

for opportunities to progress within the unit or the University *RESPONSE: (See pg. 25, 26 in final report).*

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ OUE appears to have begun a fruitful brainstorming activity to identify initiatives supportive of enhancing diversity within the unit. It would be helpful to develop a broader framework to support these and other initiatives *RESPONSE: (See pg. 27 in final report and Appendix D).*