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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
University Office of International Programs**

RESPONSE: Please see the University Office of International Programs “Update on Progress, Framework for Fostering Diversity,” revised May 2002, p. 2 (bottom of the page after the asterisk), for explanation as to how responses to this feedback report are handled.

The University Office of International Programs (UOIP) has a mission that is foundational to the University’s diversity goals, and the unit makes numerous contributions to these goals. Moreover, some of its programs go beyond the unit’s prima facie mission. For example, Diversity Grants-in-Aid, which the unit has sponsored for many years, provides outreach, guidance, and financial assistance to help domestic multicultural students connect with international educational experiences. The *Framework* report provided by UOIP clearly communicates the unit’s commitment to diversity. Also, the format of the report is excellent.

Because of the intimate connection between the UOIP mission and diversity, the most difficult task that the unit faces in the report is separating out responsibilities that are part of its normal course of operations and initiatives that go “above and beyond.” The review team understands the clear connection between virtually all of UOIP’s activities and Penn State’s diversity goals regarding international education. However, the team thinks the report should place more emphasis on diversity programming that extends beyond the unit’s typical activities. For example, the report does not develop any ideas surrounding LGBT issues and international education. Given the many different attitudes and beliefs about the LGBT experience from various countries and cultures, this nexus is fertile ground for exploration within the unit and among international students and/or those who study abroad. The report uses many acronyms, and sometimes it is difficult to determine their meaning. Comments on the report under each Challenge follow:

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ UOIP provides an extensive definition of diversity that is inclusive of those of “whatever background and social group.” However, the definition could be improved by spelling out specific diversity constituents, such as LGBT people and those with disabilities. Setting off the definition within the section with quotes or different formatting would help readers identify the unit’s explicit definition of diversity.
- ❖ The monthly meetings, semi-annual retreats, and meetings with the dean appear to be apt methods for disseminating information about diversity.
- ❖ The Administrative Council is an effective structure, but the report could be improved by providing more details on the articulation of diversity issues and the Council. Does the Council have an explicit charge to foster diversity within UOIP? The review team recommends a stand-alone diversity committee to help focus diversity issues for the unit.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ *International Mosaic* is an outstanding vehicle for communicating diversity programs and issues at the University. Do any articles explore the connections between international foci and other diversity themes? Examples along these lines would be helpful.
- ❖ UOIP demonstrates a number of its strengths in this section, including its collaboration with Educational Equity, support for its staff in diversity endeavors outside the unit, and direct sponsorship of diversity activities
- ❖ The unit responds effectively to climate issues, but it appears that no formal mechanisms, such as a climate survey, are in place to identify these issues and respond proactively. The team thinks

formal mechanisms and processes would help move the unit to the next level in creating a welcoming climate.

- ❖ The emphasis on professional development is noteworthy, but the report could be strengthened by providing more details on these experiences. Do any programs that staff have attended have diversity or climate issues as a focus?
- ❖ The inclusion of staff in developing the unit rating is innovative and provides evidence of a collaborative environment within UOIP.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ IHC and Diversity Grants-in Aid are best practices. These are the types of programs that UOIP should endeavor to replicate throughout the unit.
- ❖ The unit displays obvious strengths in providing services for thousands of students throughout the Penn State system using innovative techniques, such as real-time video conferencing and the student essay contest. Also, the representation of multicultural students in Study Abroad, at 15%, is an outstanding accomplishment.
- ❖ In this section it is sometimes difficult to separate activities that are part of the normal function of the office from specific diversity initiatives. The team recommends spotlighting those projects that have an explicit diversity focus. For example, the report could eliminate some material that is tertiary to specific diversity projects and provide more details on initiatives like the \$100,000 proposal to take underprivileged multicultural students to Africa, which is only mentioned in passing.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ UOIP has employed proactive strategies to increase the diversity of its staff, and unit demographics indicate progress towards this goal. However, more details are needed. Does every search actually have someone from underrepresented groups on the short list? What evidence exists that mentoring by senior staff and staff development, including attending professional meetings and conferences, have increased retention?

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

- ❖ The work of UOIP has an obvious effect on student enrollment in courses with diversity content, but the link between the unit and the University curriculum is indirect. The unit should only mention those points that have strong connections to the curriculum, such as its work with faculty and the Advisory Committee for Internationalizing the Curriculum. UOIP should also clearly explain how these efforts directly contribute to increased diversity in the curriculum (not just that more students take diversity-related courses as the result of unit efforts) and emphasize that its overall role in this area is secondary.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Initiatives in this area, such as the participation of the Administrative Council and assistant directors in leadership activities, are commendable, but the report does not develop an overarching strategy for diversifying the leadership of the unit. Have any of the staff who participated in leadership programs been promoted to positions of leadership within the University?

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ What is IPAL, and how does the allocation shift to IPAL support the University's diversity goals?
- ❖ Provide some examples of diversity programs that receive reallocated funds.
- ❖ The information about ISS staff conducting intercultural training for HRDC might fit better under Challenge 2.