

**Feedback on Progress Implementing the
Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
Penn State Altoona
Final Report**

Overall, Penn State Altoona has made commendable progress since the midpoint review was completed, but more proactive efforts are needed in some areas. The College's effort to achieve a 10 percent minority student enrollment is progressing and currently stands at 9 percent. Underrepresented faculty and staff now total 4 percent and almost 10 percent of the management and leadership positions are filled by underrepresented individuals. These percentages remain largely unchanged since the last review. The review team acknowledges that the College is situated in a location with limited ethnic diversity. However, faculty and staff recruitment continues to be an area of concern. No evidence is presented that the earlier recommendation to build a stronger relationship with the senior faculty mentor has occurred. A number of initiatives are underway to advance the climate within the College as it relates to gender, ethnicity, returning adult students, and disability. Notably absent in the report are efforts related to LGBT issues. It is important that the College develop appropriate measures, data, and measurable outcomes to validate the best practices identified by the College.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ A comprehensive definition has been created that celebrates and values many forms of diversity. The definition further specifies that any form of discrimination will not be tolerated. The Executive Staff, Faculty Senate, and Student Government Association all approved the definition unanimously, which demonstrates broad support across the College.
- ❖ Detailed information presents how the College's seven units (admissions, business operations, bookstore, computer center, food services, academic affairs, and student affairs) have effectively and systematically distributed, discussed, and demonstrated information to students, faculty, and staff about the University's diversity initiatives.
- ❖ The director of multicultural affairs position has been vacant since June 2003, which has contributed to several major initiatives being delayed. The position has been renamed the director of Institutional Equity and Diversity and a search is in process.
RESPONSE: The position of Director of Institutional Equity and Diversity is now filled. Jennifer de Coste was appointed effective March 15, 2004.
- ❖ It is positive that the College's ineffective 30-person diversity committee has been revamped to include 10 members who represent every major constituency group. The committee's role is to monitor climate issues and provide feedback and recommendations to the dean.
RESPONSE: This committee will play a significant role in Penn State Altoona's Framework to Foster Diversity Plan 2004-2009.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The College indicated how each major department and unit within the College demonstrates visible support for diversity.
- ❖ Efforts to assess the climate for diversity are positive. A climate survey was completed fall 2003 and the results are being tabulated. Campus climate had not been assessed for several years. A climate survey involving women was completed in 2000 and a report on disabled students was completed in 2003. The unit may consider assessing transportation, off campus housing, and other town-and-gown issues relative to diverse faculty, staff, and students.
RESPONSE: This report has been reviewed and the results are being incorporated into the College's Framework Plan 2004-2009. The MOSAIC Committee and the Director of Institutional Equity and Diversity will look at the suggestions mentioned above by the review team as they plan future assessment activities.
- ❖ Climate issues that surface receive strong administrative action from the dean. Lead investigators for such issues are the director of Student Affairs for student issues, the director of Academic Affairs for faculty issues, and the director of Business Services for staff issues. The Division of Student Affairs serves as a clearinghouse for acts of intolerance. Detailed information was presented about how each major unit within the College enhances overall climate and satisfaction with the environment.

- ❖ Eight potential best practices were identified relative to student orientation, adult students, students with disabilities, and student aid; however, more details are needed to validate the practices through measurable outcomes.

RESPONSE: Some assessment has been done relative to these issues but we will look at additional assessment to validate these best practices.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The College has a 2006 goal of 10 percent of its students being from racial/ethnic minority groups. During 2003-04, minority students comprised 9 percent of the enrollment. The Office of Admissions staff includes a full-time coordinator of Minority and Special Programs Admissions who trains and organizes minority students to serve as recruiters.
- ❖ Several effective approaches and partnerships have been developed to locate and recruit underrepresented students. These include trips to urban centers and interactions with Penn State recruitment centers in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg.
- ❖ It is positive that a retention committee has been formed to focus the College's efforts. Several diversity-focused clubs and a Community Advisory Board have also been established to create support systems to enhance retention.
- ❖ While recruitment efforts have been successful, the College has expressed frustration about the lack of cooperation in working with other recruitment arms of the University. The College is encouraged to continue its efforts to establish collaborative recruitment relationships.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ It is positive that the College regularly advertises positions in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Black Issues in Higher Education*, the Minorities Job Bank, and discipline specific journals. Interviews are also conducted during professional conferences. Four percent of all employees and 10 percent of the executive, managerial, and professional staff are from underrepresented groups. However, little progress has occurred in diversifying the faculty and staff. The College is encouraged to pursue aggressive and creative strategies in light of the demographic profile or the service area from which staff are drawn.
RESPONSE: The College acknowledges this challenge, and has established some new initiatives within in the Framework Plan 2004-2009 to further address this issue. The College has been very successful in the recruitment, promotion, and retention of women in top leadership positions, and in the faculty. For example, five of the nine members of the College's Executive Staff are women, one the four academic division heads is a women, and since 2000 six out of eight tenure track scientists hired have been women.
- ❖ Conference travel support, an internal grants fund, and a professional development fund for staff are used as retention tools. No other efforts were identified but faculty and staff turnover has been very low over the last 15 years.

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

- ❖ Several DF or GI courses (27-30) are offered regularly. The College also offers minors in Spanish and Women's Studies and an exchange program with a university in France. Other initiatives related to Career Decision Making and Health and Wellness address diversity issues.
- ❖ Faculty in Arts and Humanities; Business and Engineering; and Education, Human Development, and Social Sciences are conducting various research and creative efforts that advance the College's diversity initiatives.
- ❖ Celebrate Diversity!, an initiative that targets 7th and 8th graders, promotes diversity within the community. Several courses are supplemented with diversity activities that support the University's goals.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Release time to pursue advancement and leadership opportunities appears to be the primary approach to diversifying the College's leadership and management. The College is encouraged to develop mechanisms to identify diverse individuals with leadership potential or aspirations and support them in developing leadership skills and opportunities.

RESPONSE: This challenge is addressed with new initiatives outlined in the College's Framework Plan 2004-2009.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The College's Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity has been expanded and refocused to better achieve its objectives. The director's position, however, has yet to be filled. Much of the responsibility for leadership, oversight, and accountability of the College's diversity efforts seem to rest with this director. Some consideration should be given to the scope of responsibility and breadth of the director's position; consideration should also be given to the reporting line.

RESPONSE: As noted in our Framework Plan, the pursuit and success of our diversity initiatives is the responsibility of every member of the Penn State Altoona community. The shared experiences and learning that comes from these efforts will enrich and enhance the academic and campus life. The Director of Institutional Equity and Diversity is not the sole person responsible for the implementation and success of the Framework Plan. The CEO and Dean, Director of Student Affairs, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs are also key individuals providing leadership campus-wide.

- ❖ A Web-based diversity effort has been developed to enable faculty and staff to increase their awareness and sensitivity when working with students with disabilities. The Human Resources coordinator has been certified as a diversity trainer and will be able to conduct various educational efforts.
- ❖ A budget recycle program enables one percent of the College's permanent budget to be targeted toward various initiatives, as recommended by the Budget Advisory Committee. It is unclear whether this program goes beyond the universal one percent recycling that all units are asked to implement. Clarification of whether this program directs funding specifically toward diversity initiatives or how diversity is prioritized in the decision making process should be included.

RESPONSE: The budget recycling discussed in our Plan is internal to Penn State Altoona, and separate from the universal one percent recycling that all units are asked to implement. Since 2001-02 each unit of the College has been asked to recycle 1% of their permanent budget for reallocation within the College to new initiatives that advance the College's Strategic Plan and Framework initiatives. A review committee chaired by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs reviews requests submitted by College departments and makes recommendations to the Dean for new permanent dollars allocations

- ❖ The MOSAIC Advisory Committee and the Student Government Association's standing committee on diversity are involved in monitoring the College's diversity progress.
- ❖ A student satisfaction survey will be conducted every two years. It is recommended that the survey address town-and gown issues.

RESPONSE: The Division of Student Affairs is developing a new student satisfaction survey that is more relevant to Penn State Altoona and it will include questions related to town-and-gown issues.