

**Feedback on Progress Implementing the
Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
College of Earth and Mineral Sciences
Final Report**

The review team recognizes the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences noticeable efforts to embrace the feedback presented in the mid-term progress implementation review. It is evident that the College has made significant diversity progress by gaining College-wide buy-in, using a top-down approach to elevate its importance. The adoption of a formal definition of diversity; establishment of a Diversity Council; and addition of new diversity programs indicate significant progress. The increase in the enrollment of minority graduate students and total minority students and women in the last five years is a positive development. The format of the report continues to be excellent but it does not include clear measures for determining the plan's success in implementing diversity initiatives.

RESPONSE: The College of Earth and Mineral Sciences appreciates the efforts and comments of the review team. Clarifications on some issues are provided below. In other cases, we intend to utilize the review elements in future planning.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The review team commends the College's response to the previous feedback by adopting a new diversity definition that reflects a fuller range of diverse groups, including sexual orientation. The College-wide distribution and support from faculty and staff of its definition and plan is noteworthy.
- ❖ The establishment of a Diversity Council is an effective way of engaging faculty and staff, however, the relationship between the Executive Committee and the Diversity Council is unclear.

RESPONSE: The Diversity Council has two co-chairs, the Dean and the Director of Diversity Enhancement Programs. The Dean chairs the Executive Committee of the College and the Director of Diversity Enhancement Programs is now a member of the Executive Committee. This ensures that there is strong coordination between the Diversity Council and the administrators of the College (the members of the Executive Committee). This is a recent change and is a part of our strategic plan, but wasn't a part of our progress up to 2003.

- ❖ The addition of the director of diversity enhancement programs (DDEP) to the College's leadership team will be a positive move toward elevating the importance of diversity within the College.
- ❖ Similar to the 2001 feedback review, the College is urged to develop a college-wide climate assessment, inclusive of all constituent groups.

RESPONSE: The College began a process of a college-wide climate assessment in 2003, but was advised that either the assessment would be biased or that participants would not feel free to participate honestly because of the small numbers of underrepresented faculty, staff and students. As a result, the College abandoned these plans. The Diversity Council has placed this subject back on our agenda given this review comment. However, we believe that we may not be able to employ traditional assessment mechanisms.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The College's clear understanding that enhancing climate is not the job of a few, but rather a College-wide effort, is to be commended.
- ❖ The dean's report to faculty on the diversity plan progress is positive, however, there is no indication of how the same is communicated to staff.
RESPONSE: The Dean presented the importance of this plan to the staff at an all-staff luncheon, the specifics of the plan were communicated College-wide through email, and both the plan and the progress in completing the plan were posted on the College web page through "Dean Files." "Dean Files" is the mechanism by which important topics are communicated to the entire College.
- ❖ The method by which individual members of the College report climate challenges is unclear. One recommended approach is to encourage members of the College to join Penn State's "Zero Tolerance for Hate Support Network."
RESPONSE: The College is encouraging members to report through several channels depending on what channel makes them feel the most secure. The Diversity Council members are themselves allies, there to support faculty, staff and students. The Director of Diversity Enhancement Programs, the Human Resources representative, and the College's Ombudsperson also provide opportunity for members to report climate challenges. However, we are also pleased to encourage members of the College to join Penn State's "Zero Tolerance for Hate Support Network." This element is also now a part of our strategic plan.
- ❖ Although it is clear how the College identifies and monitors climate concerns, it is unclear how it responds to and effectively addresses those concerns.
RESPONSE: The College takes any climate concern very seriously and will not hesitate to communicate the principles by which the College operates, the debilitating nature of climate issues, or our expectations for a positive workplace environment. However, the mechanism by which we address specific concerns is highly dependent on the nature of the issue. The College works diligently to follow HR policies and best practices and we work hard to promote information gathering and extensive discussion to identify and understand the problem, to communicate with all parties involved, and to seek solutions and to enable better understanding.
- ❖ It is unclear what methods are used to apply the "Best Practices" listed in the College's report or how the College/Unit leaders are held accountable for improving climate.
RESPONSE: Every unit leader is required to include fostering diversity as a part of their unit strategic plans, and each plan and the resulting actions are reviewed by the Dean. In addition, climate issues are now a prominent part of the administrative review form. This review takes place every two years. Again, this was a recent change, implemented for administrative reviews during spring 2004. This element is also a part of our strategic plan.
- ❖ As noted in the 2001 feedback, the review team suggests that the College develop quantifiable measures of climate.
RESPONSE: The response from challenge 1 is repeated as it represents the same basic issue. The College began a process of a college-wide climate assessment in 2003 designed to measure climate, but was advised that either the assessment would be biased, or that participants would not feel free to participate honestly, because of the small numbers of underrepresented faculty, staff and students. As a result, the College abandoned these plans. The Diversity Council has placed this subject back on our agenda given this review comment. However, we believe that we may not be able to employ traditional assessment mechanisms.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Notably, minority graduate enrollment figures have doubled in the past two years.
- ❖ Noteworthy programs include exposing girls to the earth sciences from an early age, advertising programs in targeted publications, the proactive establishment of partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities, and efforts to reach Latino/Hispanic, and American Indian students.
- ❖ The College's partnership with AESEDA to engage 9th grade students from the Martin Luther King Jr. High School in the earth sciences and engineering is a potential best practice. The rates of 100% high school graduation success and 60% of the graduates who pursue studies in the fields of math and science are laudable.
- ❖ Increasing the College's budget for Diversity Enhancement programs, adding a staff position to aid in student recruitment and retention, and the new student center are positive steps in ensuring access and success for underrepresented groups.
- ❖ The review team notes the lack of metrics to examine the impact/success of the College's retention programs.

RESPONSE: There has been a "tyranny of small numbers" in the past that has made such statistics less useful. With the growth in student recruitment, we expect to have a much better sense of the impact/success of our retention programs in the future. The development of metrics for retention efforts is now a part of our strategic plan.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The review team applauds the College's significant revamping of its strategies for recruiting diverse workforce. However, it is too early to effectively measure the success of such strategies.
- ❖ There is little mention of strategies for recruiting, retaining, and promoting underrepresented staff. This is disconcerting, especially when out of the 69 staff in the College, only one is a member of an underrepresented group.
RESPONSE: It is the opinion of the College that the current University-wide process of hiring staff makes it difficult for the College to develop effective strategies for recruiting underrepresented staff. We believe that this issue should be addressed by a University-wide task force. Without better opportunities for recruitment, the issues of retention and promotion are moot. The College would like to be an active participant in solving this issue.
- ❖ Although using rank-balance as a criterion for serving on committees and functions is an affirmative way of ensuring a balanced representation of faculty in the decision-making process, it does not address the need for balanced representation of staff.
RESPONSE: Staff members have many new opportunities for representation (including on the Diversity Council and the College Council). However, we will not be able to effectively consider balanced representation until we do a better job of recruiting underrepresented staff.
- ❖ Proactive work toward creating family-friendly policies is a positive first step for recruiting and retaining faculty and staff.
- ❖ There is a need for increased availability and support for diversity-related activities or professional development for training faculty and staff.
RESPONSE: The College agrees and will work to support additional diversity-related activities and professional development.

- ❖ There is a lack of metrics to identify the success of recruitment and retention programs for faculty and staff from underrepresented groups, specifically regarding race/ethnicity and gender.

***RESPONSE:** The College's progress report includes tables by year for both gender and race/ethnicity for undergraduates, graduates, tenured and tenure track faculty by professorial level, standing academic appointments, fixed-term appointments, and for staff. Our lack of success in the early years of reporting, and growing success over the last two years, provide a strong metric of recent successes. In the future, we can also add tables summarizing individual job interviews. However, beyond these very specific measures, the College is uncertain as to what metrics are available. The College would appreciate guidance on other metrics for success of recruitment and retention so that these can be a standard element of our reporting.*

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

- ❖ Professor Yapa's Philadelphia Field Project is an exciting research project whose impact needs to be assessed to be considered a best practice. The current development of the AESEDA project also has the potential to be a best practice if metrics to measure its success are provided.
- ❖ The College has a unique opportunity to infuse diversity into the curriculum outside of the current GI courses (e.g. Urban Geography, Human Geography, Economic Geography, etc.). The team suggests that the proposed new courses (page 26 from the Record of Progress Report) be recommended as new international/intercultural requirements.
***RESPONSE:** The College is actively working on this topic, but began after the submission of our reports. We currently have a task force in place to create a systematic College-wide approach to GI courses. This task force is now described in our strategic plan.*

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The College has made some progress in diversifying its Executive Council with members of underrepresented groups.
- ❖ As stated in the mid-term evaluation, special attention is still needed for this Challenge since no progress has been made to date and the supporting documentation is conflicting (see Challenge 6, bullet 2, Dean's response; 2003-2004 Plan, page 28).

***RESPONSE:** This statement needs to be clarified if the College is to be responsive. We are not sure what Challenge 6, bullet 2, Dean's response; 2003-2004 Plan, page 28 refers to in terms of the text submitted.*

- *Challenge 6, part II (but not on page 28 and not 2003-2004) involves the diversity profile of the College's leadership. The College's leadership is more diverse than at any time in its history, with two females and two African-Americans serving as part of a 12 member Executive Council that just three years ago was entirely white males. Four of the five open leadership positions in the last two years were filled by underrepresented faculty.*
- *Page 28, bullet 2, addresses the new rank-balance effort to promote a more diverse decision-making process and to ensure access of faculty to College leadership and leadership roles. This process has been implemented in the College.*

However, we are uncertain if either of these two topics were the issues intended by the review team under this bullet.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The College's alignment of diversity as one of its three major objectives is praiseworthy, however, the actions are not inclusive of administrators. It is evident to the review team that the College's leadership—from the Dean to the Diversity and Executive Councils—has been instrumental in acting as agents of change.
- ❖ Significant financial resources were allocated in support of the efforts of the Director of Diversity Enhancement Programs, and diversity recruitment and outreach programs.
- ❖ Although the College's unit leadership and Executive Council have become active participants in the implementation of diversity strategies, there is no clear evidence of how departments and units within the College are held accountable and or/rewarded for supporting diversity goals.

RESPONSE: Every unit and every unit leader are required by the College to include fostering diversity as a part of their unit strategic plans, and each plan and the resulting actions are reviewed by the Dean. In addition, climate issues are now a prominent part of the administrative review form. This review takes place every two years. In addition, contributions to promoting diversity and a welcoming climate are now a part of the annual progress reports of all faculty.