Feedback on Progress Implementing  
*A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003*  
College of Health and Human Development  
Final Report

The College of Health and Human Development diversity committee has developed an inclusive mission and understanding of diversity, but it emphasizes visibility and knowledge. However, the College’s reported goals and activities focus almost exclusively on faculty and students of color, particularly African-American. Within the report, there is very little mention of staff and no evidence of attention to issues related to gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability, although there may be existing areas of involvement in HHD with regard to these issues. 

**RESPONSE:** It is true that during the last five years, the focus of our efforts has been more on students and faculty than on staff. The revised report explains more clearly the rationale behind that choice and makes it clear that we value the many contributions made by our staff to the College of Health and Human Development. We disagree with the opinion of the review committee however, that there was no evidence in our original submission of our commitment to diversity issues related to gender, age, sexual orientation or disability. Nevertheless, we have bolstered the revised text to assure readers that our efforts in diversity include a wide range of diverse populations.

The Review Team notes the College’s forthrightness in discussing some of its difficulties and limitations. However, the Team is left with the impression that the College has in many ways succumbed to the Challenges rather than aggressively address them. 

**RESPONSE:** We have not succumbed to the challenges, but we have tried to be realistic about those things we can control and those that we cannot.

It is clear that substantial understanding and support for diversity come from staff, students, and faculty in many areas of the College. Academic departments address issues of diversity, multiculturalism, and equity within the curricula. However, without strong support from College leadership, diversity initiatives remain “add ons” rather than a core component for enhancing the vitality of the College. Without a coherent and integrated approach to diversity and equity, the positive initiatives – and the overall benefits of diversity – cannot be fully realized. 

**RESPONSE:** We regret that our first draft left readers with the impression that we viewed diversity as an “add-on” rather then recognizing it as integral to the vitality of the College of Health and Human Development (HHD). Nothing could be further from reality. We are fully aware of the centrality of diversity to our mission and embrace these issues in our instructional responsibilities, our research and our outreach activities. Enhancing an understanding of diversity and creating a climate of inclusiveness for faculty, staff and students is a defining component of the mission of the College of Health and Human Development. The academic disciplines that comprise the College of Health and Human Development are characterized by direct engagement with individuals from all walks-of-life. Our efforts to communicate and inculcate a vision to foster diversity to our faculty, staff and students are predicated on the idea that understanding diversity is essential to achieving our mission to improve human health and well-being across the life span.

**Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity**

- It is commendable that the College has a fully functional and operational diversity committee. It appears that committee membership is limited to faculty. Staff, student, and administrator representation should also be included. Information on how this group interacts with the dean, and the role of the diversity committee and College administration in developing the1998-2003 Framework implementation report and the 2004-09 diversity strategic plan should be included. 

**RESPONSE:** The revised progress report includes more information on these issues. The shift to an all faculty diversity committee was intended to engage faculty more fully in our efforts to significantly increase the number of faculty and students from underrepresented groups. Two principles guided the decision to move to an all faculty committee. First, we want to promote faculty ownership of the process of recruiting and retaining multicultural faculty and students. Second, we were concerned that the previous structure was not effective in reaching all of the academic units because the structure did not require a representative from each unit. The Diversity Committee has functioned independently during the last five years and served in a consultative role in developing the strategic plan for the next five years. The new strategic plan
recommends the development of a coordinated, tiered system of committees that will include faculty, staff and students.

- The understanding of diversity is inclusive but focuses only on increasing visibility and knowledge. It is unclear whether (or how) this understanding is communicated and shared throughout the College. **RESPONSE: The College employs a variety of methods to communicate our understanding of diversity and to emphasize the integral nature of diversity to our mission across all of our constituencies. See pages 1 through 5 of the revised report for a description of the numerous workshops, lectures and presentations that were sponsored during the last five years. See also the description of the “Diversity Achievement Award” that was created by the College of Health and Human Development. All of these efforts, and others described in the revised report, contribute to the development of a shared and inclusive understanding of diversity within our College.)**

- The College’s director of Diversity Enhancement Programs is an asset and has clearly had a positive impact on the College’s diversity efforts.

- Inviting the director of Diversity Enhancement Programs to the executive committee meeting six times per year is an important step in bringing diversity into the forefront of the operation of the College. However, that she is invited only when diversity is on the agenda – rather than included as a full participant in the Executive Committee – creates a sense that diversity is an “add-on” rather than integral to the College’s mission. **RESPONSE: In the next five year period, the director of HHD Diversity Enhancement Programs will attend all meetings of the Executive Committee of the College of Health and Human Development. See Strategic Action #21 on page 20 of the revised strategic plan for 2004-2009.**

- The College is commended for the extensive array of workshops and seminars in support of the goal to “promote and discuss the importance of enhancing diversity at Penn State” and for participation in the CIC kinesiology “Diversity Summit.”

- Creation of the Diversity Achievement Award, incorporated into the annual faculty/staff awards process, is notable.

**Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate**

- The services of the director of Diversity Enhancement Programs and her staff are a primary component in creating a positive climate for students. Conducting regular meetings with students to discuss academic progress, career development, and climate concerns is noteworthy. Responsibility for creating a welcoming climate seems to rest with the Office of Diversity Enhancement Programs rather than being integrated throughout the College. **RESPONSE: Responsibility for creating a welcoming climate rests with all of the academic units within the College of Health and Human Development. Please see pages 7 and 8 of the revised progress assessment for a detailed description of the regular and routine efforts taken by our academic units to create a welcoming climate for faculty, staff and students.**

- The College states that it “has been proactive in attempting to gauge the ‘climate’ for diverse faculty and students.” Climate concerns appear to be focused on undergraduate students and faculty of color. Attention to a broader range of diversity issues such as LGBT, physical/mental abilities, age, and gender should be addressed in relation to graduate students, staff, and administration in addition to faculty and undergraduates. **RESPONSE: The initial survey of HHD undergraduate students conducted in 2003 did employ a broad solicitation of diverse students. Students were asked about their gender, if they had a disability or impairment that substantially limited a major life activity, their racial or ethnic identity and their sexual identity. However, in only two of these categories (gender and racial/ethnic identity) were there sufficient sample sizes to conduct meaningful statistical comparisons. In the disability and
sexual identity groups there were not enough respondents to perform meaningful comparisons. Approximately one percent of the respondents (13 of 1,148) identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual; whereas only two percent (24 of 1,148) reported that they had a disability or impairment that substantially limited a major life activity. Neither of these two rates provided a sufficient sample to draw meaningful comparisons. In the next five year period, the College of Health and Human Development will collect data from graduate students regarding the climate in which they operate – see Strategic Action #8 on page 7 of the new plan.

- In an attempt to address issues that were uncovered by the faculty climate survey, open discussions were held within departments. After this method was found to be ineffective, it is regrettable that no further attempts were made to follow up and address the survey results that clearly indicated significant climate concerns. **RESPONSE: A follow-up is planned for the next five year period. See Strategic Action #13 on pages 11 and 12 of the new plan.**

- The College is commended for conducting an undergraduate student climate survey, which yielded generally positive results. It appears that graduate students were not included in the assessment. There does not appear to have been any effort to develop strategies and actions to address the issues of harassment that were reported in the survey. **RESPONSE: As indicated previously, the College intends to undertake data collection with graduate students in the next five year period – see Strategic Action #8 on page 7 of the new plan.**

**Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body**

- The Office of Diversity Enhancement Programs offers several commendable recruiting and retention programs that have the potential to yield strong results. These include outreach activities for undergraduate recruiting, a listserv, book loan program, newsletter, SOS program, and research opportunities. The dean’s involvement in recruiting diverse students is positive. Information on academic unit involvement in undergraduate recruiting would be helpful. **RESPONSE: The revised report on our progress during the period 1998 to 2003 includes information on the involvement of academic units in undergraduate recruitment – see pages 15 and 16. Our success to date in recruiting and retaining multicultural students gives us great confidence in the approaches we have employed to date.**

- Graduate student recruiting efforts utilize the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) and the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) program to address research development and mentoring of prospective students. Involvement of academic units in identifying and recruiting minority graduate students is positive.

- The College cites its support of multicultural student participation in the National Minority Research Symposium in fall 2000. Clarification of why this support has subsequently been transferred to the academic units and information on the impact of this change on participation rates would be helpful. **RESPONSE: The participation of students in this conference was a “one-time” opportunity. Dean Coward was pleased to provide supplemental funds to underwrite this trip. Subsequent to 2000, the conference format changed and this particular opportunity was no longer available for students. The academic units have always had a primary role in encouraging and supporting research presentations and conference participation by HHD graduate students, including multicultural graduate students. This strategy, academic units taking the lead with the assistance and support of the HHD Office of Diversity Enhancement Programs and the Dean’s Office, enables students to participate in discipline specific research conferences, strengthens ties to faculty, and exposes students to the academic and industry marketplace in a manner that fosters professional development.**
The College has done well in increasing the number of scholarship endowments available to multicultural students, although the total dollar value of these scholarships is relatively small. College-supported and University-level awards should be differentiated in order to clarify the level of College support.

RESPONSE: We are proud of our success in expanding the number of scholarships that designate first priority for multicultural or female students. While the dollar value of these new scholarships is small, they are significant because it demonstrates our commitment to diversity in development activities. However, such awards represent only a portion of the total scholarships that are available to diverse students in the College of Health and Human Development. For example, in the 2003-2004 academic year, the College of Health and Human Development awarded 373 scholarships totaling over $700,000 ($717,761) in College-supported scholarship funds. Female students – who represent approximately two-thirds (68%) of our student body – received 78% of the scholarship monies. In a similar manner, multicultural students – who represent just over 12% of our student body – received 15% of our scholarship monies. Thus, our overall scholarship program is disproportionately assisting women and minority students in the College of Health and Human Development.

Relationships with Dillard University and the National Black Nurses Association for recruiting are positive.

The report notes increases in the recruitment of both minority undergraduate and graduate students. Demographic information about which minority groups were impacted by these increases should be included. RESPONSE: The revised progress report includes additional information on minority enrollment growth. Please see Table 2 on page 12 for undergraduate student enrollment data and Table 3 on page 17 for graduate student enrollment data.

The Carlson project to increase minority enrollment in hospitality management is a best practice.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

The College is commended for having achieved its goal of successfully recruiting two new minority faculty in each of the last three hiring cycles. Hiring efforts appear to focus on racial/ethnic minorities. The College recognizes that retention is important to achieving a “critical mass” of underrepresented faculty members; however, it appears that retention efforts are ad hoc and focus on countering employment offers from other institutions.

RESPONSE: We have focused our hiring efforts on racial/ethnic minorities for two primary reasons. First, we believe that it is critical to our future success that we establish a critical mass of minority faculty. Such a critical mass will be the cornerstone of our efforts to recruit and retain a diverse student body and will greatly enhance our ability to retain faculty of color. Second, unlike some academic units at Penn State, we have the benefit of having a significant representation of women on our faculty. The College of Health and Human Development boasts the highest percentage of women among its full professors (38%) of all academic units at University Park and women represent slightly more than half (21 of 40 or 53%) of our faculty at the assistant professor rank. Overall, nearly half (65 of 132 or 43%) of our tenured or tenure-eligible faculty are women. Thus, we do not believe it is necessary for us to set specific targets for hiring women to our faculty. Indeed, we anticipate that women will continue to represent a significant portion of our faculty in the years ahead.

We regret that the review committee concluded that our retention efforts were exclusively countering offers from other institutions – although such efforts are not unimportant to retaining minority faculty of the highest quality. Therefore, we have revised our progress assessment to include information on our other retention efforts (please see pages 25 and 26). Overall, we have employed a two-pronged
strategy to promote retention. The first approach utilizes formal workshops, seminars and lectures that support faculty in their three primary domains of responsibility – i.e., teaching, research and outreach. The second approach is of a more informal nature and is intended to create opportunities for socialization and norm setting – so that all faculty members have the opportunity to understand fully what level of performance is expected of them.

- The College has hired seven new staff members from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups since 1998. Recruitment strategies and data regarding gender would be helpful. Information on retention programs and their success should be included. **RESPONSE: The text of the revised progress report has been expanded to address these issues – see page 24 for details.**

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

- Disciplines in the College provide an excellent platform from which to build and support major curricular change within the University. This is a strong area for the College. Examples in the report showcase the richness that is possible. Extension into curriculum with more focus on issues of gender and LGBT topics would strengthen the diversity curriculum. **RESPONSE: Age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation assume a central role in determining human health and well-being. Many courses in our curriculum explore the interaction of these factors on individuals, populations and providers.**

- Efforts to “hire faculty with research interests and expertise in the social, cultural and economic factors that produce health and developmental disparities among diverse population groups” support curricular integration and acknowledge the link between research and classroom.

- The College’s Urban Community Partnership Initiative is a best practice and acknowledges the complexity of urban issues beyond focus on race/ethnicity.

**Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management**

- The College is to be commended for assigning the additional title of “assistant to the dean” to Ms. Hopson-King to reinforce the central role of Diversity Enhancement Programs within the College. While this move addresses areas of outreach and undergraduate studies, graduate studies do not appear to be addressed. **RESPONSE: Ms. Hopson-King routinely consults with the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education about matters pertaining to diversity in graduate education. She also works with the Professors in Charge of graduate education in each HHD academic unit to support their recruitment efforts. In addition, Ms. Hopson-King is involved in the direct recruitment of graduate students through her participation in the CIC Caravans, SACNES (The Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science), COR (Career Opportunities in Research Education and Training), ABRCMS (the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students), and through her attendance at other “swings,” recruitment fairs, conferences and her participation in the MARC and SROP programs.**
The dean’s effort to take a multicultural faculty member under his wing is positive but there does not appear to be any formal mechanism to identify underrepresented individuals with leadership potential and to support and develop their leadership aspirations with leadership program opportunities.

**RESPONSE:** The College’s revised strategic plan for the period 2004 to 2009 describes actions that we intend to take in both of these areas. Please see Strategic Action #8 on page 7 and Strategic Action #17 on page 15 of the revised submission.

**Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals**

- Investment in faculty positions that focus on multicultural issues in health and human development is positive.

- The reorganization of the position of director of Diversity Enhancement Programs is positive. It is unclear whether additional resources are provided to support the increased scope of this office.

**RESPONSE:** As part of our effort to position the College of Health and Human Development for success in achieving our strategic goals for the next five years, we will undertake a comprehensive review of the HHD Diversity Enhancement Program to enumerate the scope of responsibilities and evaluate the financial and personnel resources committed to our diversity enhancement efforts. Please see Strategic Action #22 on page 20 of the revised plan for more details.

**Concluding Statement**

The College of Health and Human Development appreciates the opportunity to respond to the feedback and insights shared by the review committee. The College has made considerable strides in achieving our diversity related goals; but we also realize that there is still much to be accomplished. We believe that many of our efforts to date constitute best practices in a dynamic and complex environment. At the same time, we are well aware that there are areas where we could do more. We are determined to continue our success in creating a welcoming campus climate and recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty, staff and student body. We are also dedicated to building an intellectual environment in which all of our students feel valued and appreciated and where they understand the fundamental linkage between the diversity of the human experience and improving the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.