

**Feedback on Progress Implementing**  
**A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003**  
**School of Information Sciences and Technology**  
**Final Report**

The School of Information Sciences and Technology has moved forward with addressing the complexities of a multi-located unit that is responsible for operating cohesively. With the new building, the School will be able to fully address the challenge of climate, diversity, and inclusion. The assistant dean for equity and diversity, the recruiting coordinator for undergraduate admissions, and the newly reconstituted diversity committee will be able to work collaboratively to fully implement the *Framework*. However, it is unclear who has the ultimate responsibility for accountability.

*RESPONSE: This last point is excellent and depends on the activity, whether it is recruitment, retention, community, intervention, or education. We feel that there are layers of accountability, where the deans, unit directors, and faculty, staff, and students all bear a variety of responsibilities.*

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

- ❖ The College's definition of diversity remains sound and embraces intellectual diversity as well as demographic diversity.
- ❖ It is positive that diversity issues and policies are incorporated in PSU 17 and IST 110 and that the *Framework* is now distributed through PSU 17 in addition to the *What We Value at IST* brochure. Discussion of these documents is an important follow-up to distribution. *RESPONSE: Such discussions take place in the classroom and in out of class contexts.*
- ❖ It is commendable that the newly reconstituted diversity committee is broadly representative of the school's composition and includes both undergraduate and graduate students. The committee will be addressing many objectives directed at all aspects of the unit. It is recommended that a timeline and distribution of responsibilities be developed to facilitate implementation. *RESPONSE: Great suggestion and one we will implement.*
- ❖ It is positive that the chairs of faculty recruiting committees are required to attend the Affirmative Action Office session on recruiting a diverse workforce and that these guidelines are also part of fall orientation for faculty and staff.
- ❖ The School has offered an honest assessment of opportunities for improvement under this Challenge and strategies for improvement. *RESPONSE: We appreciate this acknowledgement and feel that unless such honesty exists, change cannot occur.*

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

- ❖ The Dean is commended for offering clear leadership for diversity, including offering resources for hiring in diversity areas, support of WIST and WISE, and development of D-NET, the new student organization for students interested in diversity issues.
- ❖ Regular climate surveys for faculty and staff are positive, and the decision to delay the planned fall survey due to the impending move is understandable. The School's planned consideration of developing a strategy to assess climate for students and to assess student awareness of resources is encouraged.
- ❖ The transitions committee demonstrates the school's ability to anticipate and proactively develop strategies for integration of the entire School, focusing on building a common culture with mutual goals directed at equity, diversity, and respect. *RESPONSE: With six months into the move, we cannot overly stress the importance of the work of this committee.*
- ❖ The School's proactive strategies have yielded greatest success regarding women. While progress is being made with other underrepresented groups, continued emphasis on expanding initiatives to target such groups is still warranted. *RESPONSE: Absolutely. Constant attention is required.*
- ❖ Development of D-NET, as well as linkage to other diversity related webs, is a best practice.

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

- ❖ The School has demonstrated sound use of benchmarking in leveraging its discussion of Carnegie Mellon's *Unlocking the Clubhouse* into brainstorming to develop a 29-point plan to target recruiting efforts.
- ❖ Initiatives such as summer programming, Digital Divas, Math Fest, WIST, hiring a full time undergraduate recruiter, and outreach to underrepresented groups represent visible commitment to recruiting a diverse student population. Retention efforts are largely group oriented. As retention strategies are further developed attention to individual students and proactive intervention strategies to encourage the success of students from target groups would complement the group approach.  
*RESPONSE: Although not highlighted in the final report, we take a highly individualized approach to seeking out students with concerns as well as letting them know about the advising and counseling resources available to them. Faculty, staff in the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the assistant dean for equity and diversity have all been identified as sources of support for students belonging to underrepresented groups, including women. These faculty and staff also look for ways to intervene when appropriate and necessary.*
- ❖ A potential best practice is the variety of ways students, both undergraduate and graduate are used in recruiting efforts. IST might consider developing mechanisms to track the success of these strategies.  
*RESPONSE: This is an excellent idea and fits with our interest in tracking the impact of our publications.*

**Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce**

- ❖ The diversity council may want to explore ways to enhance recruitment of faculty and staff, and develop more formalized retention initiatives appropriate to the culture and needs of IST to supplement the more ad hoc individual approaches.
- ❖ IST may wish to consider acknowledging and appropriately valuing the contributions to diversity in the context of service within tenure and promotion process and in staff reviews. *RESPONSE: Currently, for both faculty and staff reviews, contributions to the IST community are explicitly included.*
- ❖ The School is commended for its courage in sharing information about successes (especially in regard to women) and remaining challenges in hiring to promote diversity.

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

- ❖ New course development infusing diversity as well as increased internationalization of internships and course requirements is positive.
- ❖ The Institute for Information Policy and the Center for a Digital Society seem well thought out.
- ❖ Courses such as IST 431 and IST 531 offer good examples of infusion of multicultural approach in the curriculum.
- ❖ Best practices include: the Center for a Digital Society, focusing on issues of the digital divide and inequality; increased internationalization of curricular requirements; collaboration with College of Communications on The Institute for Information Policy; and research by faculty members specifically exploring issues of technology and underrepresented populations to advance both the research and diversity agendas of the University.

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

- ❖ While the appointment of a female Assistant Dean for Equity and Diversity is positive, it appears that she bears much of the responsibility for the success of the School's diversity programs. The School is encouraged to seek a balance between centralizing diversity efforts with the Office for Equity and Diversity and maintaining a broad ownership of such efforts throughout the School. *RESPONSE: We agree. We look to the assistant dean to providing leadership and direction and to appropriate others for the implementation of initiatives appropriate to the missions of their units. The diversity team will make attention to this issue a priority.*

- ❖ Encouraging faculty members who are women and/or members of underrepresented groups to assume leadership roles as advisors is positive. How these diverse leaders are mentored and how their activities are valued in yearly reviews and the tenure and promotion process are important to retention.
- ❖ An individual approach to identifying leadership and professional development opportunities and matching faculty and staff members to that opportunity may enhance participation rates.

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

- ❖ Creation of the Office of Equity and Diversity and appointment of an assistant dean for Equity and Diversity demonstrate the School's commitment to diversity goals.
- ❖ The School is commended for its proactive approach to addressing transitional considerations for creating a sense of community.
- ❖ IST demonstrates an awareness of the continued need for staff diversity as an important goal.