

**Feedback on Progress Implementing the
Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
The College of the Liberal Arts
Final Report**

The College is commended for its ongoing financial and administrative support for its numerous diversity initiatives. Especially laudable are two initiatives: recruiting and retaining senior African American faculty and the SOC 119 course and the Race Relations Project. It is regrettable, however, that the College does not employ an effective method for identifying and assessing climate issues and makes no effort to recruit, retain, or develop diversity within the staff ranks. The team also felt that it was unfortunate that the College did not include the Dean's 2001 feedback when drafting the present (2003) review of progress.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The College's definition of diversity is thoughtful and reflective, and its connection to the central success of the College is well defined.
- ❖ The review team notes several inconsistencies in regards to the College's definition of diversity. At one point the definition is confined to matters of gender, race, and ethnicity. However, elsewhere in the report, the definition is more inclusive and more accurately reflects the actions currently implemented in the College. The review team advocates expanding the formal definition to reflect the more inclusive nature of the College's actions.

RESPONSE: The College will broaden our definition of diversity to include disability and sexual orientation along with gender, race, and ethnicity. The omission should not be interpreted to mean a lack of concern for providing a climate in which these groups can be recruited and in which they can work productively with dignity and in safety.

- ❖ The College's distribution vehicles for diversity initiatives appear to be continuing in an effective manner. Notably, the College includes alumni in this distribution.
- ❖ The review team applauds the student-focused, comprehensive nature of the multicultural coordinator.
- ❖ Given the absence of a standing Diversity Committee, information on how the diversity agenda is forwarded within the College would be helpful. The review team also noted that the proposed diversity agenda is based in the faculty, without staff involvement.

RESPONSE: The college will constitute a climate committee whose responsibilities will include attention to issues regarding faculty, students, and staff.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ The fiscal commitment of the College to faculty and student diversity is obvious, and is reflected in the data provided. However, the review team feels that the data provided is a one-dimensional measure of climate.

RESPONSE: The new climate committee's responsibilities will include addressing the findings of the recent faculty and staff survey as well as developing systematic, on-going indicators to measure climate.

- ❖ Beyond dependence on individual department heads, mechanisms for identifying inclusive climate issues (e.g. faculty, staff, and student) and/or assessing satisfaction (as was noted in the 2001 review) are unclear.

RESPONSE: The College's new climate committee will develop appropriate mechanisms for identifying and assessing inclusive climate issues.

- ❖ Continued workshops for teaching assistants on sexual harassment are positive. The College might consider expanding the requirement to include additional aspects of diversity as well as be extended to all faculty, staff, and students.

RESPONSE: The committee will also be charged with developing programming for faculty, staff, and graduate students.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ The efforts toward recruitment of minority students are comprehensive and diverse, and it appears that success is constantly re-evaluated.
- ❖ While the enrollment of African American and Latino(a) undergraduate students at University Park has increased substantially over the past five years, the retention and graduation rates of minority students lags significantly behind that of white students.

RESPONSE: University data provided by the Office for Educational Equity show that the retention and graduation rates for minority students in Liberal Arts at University Park lag behind those rates for white students. If the review committee is saying that any differential between white and minority graduation rates is a matter of concern, then we agree. With that caveat, the table below, with data from the Office of Educational Equity and the Penn State Fact Book, shows that our graduation rates exceed those of other UP colleges, with the differential being especially striking for the four-year graduation rate. Nevertheless, there is much work to be done and we are committed to doing it.

GRADUATION RATE COMPARISONS: UP ONLY**4-year graduation rates, 1998 cohort**

	total minority	White
UP – all colleges	26.8%	44.8%
UP – Liberal Arts only	63.0%	74.8%

5-year graduation rates, 1997 cohort

	total minority	White
UP – all colleges	66.5%	79.3%
UP – Liberal Arts only	67.4%	84.1%

6-year graduation rates, 1996 cohort

	total minority	White
UP – all colleges	69.4%	82.4%

- ❖ The College has not enjoyed comparable increases in minority enrollment at locations other than University Park.
RESPONSE: *We find this comment puzzling since the College has no role in recruitment or retention of students at locations other than University Park.*
- ❖ The role of climate in retention of minority students remains unaddressed. The College is encouraged to address this lack of information.
RESPONSE: *The new climate committee will have this as one of its charges.*
- ❖ Faculty trips to HBCUs and the exchange program with Howard University are potential best practices. The Review Team recommends outcome measures be provided as evidence of the success of these programs.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ The College's record of substantially increasing the number of female and Black faculty members, especially in the senior ranks is commendable
- ❖ Notably, the retention rate for African American faculty members exceeds that for whites. However, the retention rate for Latinos and Asians is much lower.
- ❖ The Review Team noted that three recommendations made to the College about their "mid-point" report were not addressed: (1) a college-wide strategy to support individual departments' recruitment efforts.
RESPONSE: This will be one of the charges of the college's new diversity committee. (2) A clarification of strategies for the retention of junior faculty. RESPONSE: If this refers to minority faculty, the issue of climate will be addressed by the College's new climate committee. If it refers to junior faculty in general, the College believes that it already has in place a number of policies, including orientation, research semesters, workshops on promotion and tenure, and start up funding, that enhance the likelihood of the success of junior faculty. (3) A plan for the recruitment of staff from underrepresented groups. RESPONSE: See immediately below.
- ❖ It is disturbing that current College actions continue to ignore the lack of diversity in the staff ranks and make no attempts to address this issue.
RESPONSE: The College's director of human resources has been charged with investigating the current processes for staff recruitment in the college in order to insure the incorporation of a proactive affirmative action dimension. This will require a greater role for the central college administration in staff searches in the departments.
- ❖ The combination of recruitment strategies that have been utilized has been very effective. The Review Team notes these as best practices.
RESPONSE: This statement appears to be contradictory in light of the remarks above.

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

- ❖ The expansion of diversity education beyond Penn State to institutes for middle and high school teachers is commendable.
- ❖ It is also commendable that diversity is a significant component of the First Year Seminars.
- ❖ The strong support for diversity-related research projects through funding from the RGSO is noteworthy. It remains unclear how information about the opportunities for RGSO support are communicated to scholars from underrepresented groups. *RESPONSE: There is no separate process to inform scholars from underrepresented groups of opportunities for RGSO support. All faculty in the College are informed of opportunities for RGSO support by the RGSO office and the departments through publications, Emails, meetings, and information included in orientations.*
- ❖ As noted in the 2001 review, beyond courses that are multicultural by nature, it is unclear how diversity is infused into the broader curriculum of the College. *RESPONSE: There is a large and increasing quotient of diversity in a substantial number of our courses at every level. This happens in a natural way because of the changing pedagogy, methodology, and foci of our disciplines and the influx of new faculty. If the review committee is suggesting that the central administration of the College intervene in the process of determining the content of courses in the disciplines, we respectfully decline.*
- ❖ The College's financial and administrative support for the SOC 119 course and the affiliated Race Relations Project is laudable. This innovative program is a best practice.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The large percentage of senior leadership positions held by females is positive.
- ❖ It is unclear what structured processes exist for targeting underrepresented faculty and staff for leadership experience and opportunities. ***RESPONSE: The College has no structured processes for targeting underrepresented faculty and staff for leadership experience and opportunities. We would be interested in learning about successful programs in place in other colleges that we might adapt to Liberal Arts' needs.***

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ As noted in the 2001 review, more explanation is needed regarding how the administrative consolidation of the Departments of African/African American Studies, Labor and Industrial Relations, and Women's Studies supports the College's diversity goals. This report has previously indicated the College's substantial support for its various diversity initiatives. ***RESPONSE: The consolidation of administrative services for the three departments mentioned is part of a college-plan that now includes merged administrative support for all but four of the College's eighteen departments. The goal is greater efficiency, better backup services, and better resource utilization, all of which, we believe, are essential to progress towards all of the College's goals, including its diversity goals.***