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

The College is clearly committed to preparing students to be teachers in multicultural environments. Both the curriculum and field experiences have been analyzed and redesigned to provide students with a more diverse set of experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom.

It would be interesting to know about the role of the Penn State Educational Partnership Program (PEPP) in recruiting. Possible reasons behind declines in enrollment of students from underrepresented groups should be addressed, and more information on recruitment processes for faculty would be useful. It appears that less attention is directed toward recruitment and retention efforts for staff.

Overall, the College of Education takes a well-integrated approach to diversity in its practices and initiatives. Opportunities for improvement include meeting the challenge of diversifying the faculty and assessing future needs for organizational change.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
- ❖ Diversity is defined broadly and includes attention to respecting philosophical differences. The Review Team noted that on the cover of the update, religion is included with other categories in the definition, although it is not included in the formal definition provided in the text of the document. *Response: We have been treating religion as part of the cultural background portion of our definition. We have now modified our text to include an explicit reference to religion.* The definition is demonstrated through courses, conferences, relationships with HBCUs, and the establishment of the Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee as a standing committee in the College.
- ❖ Diversity topics for students are highlighted in the alumni magazine, town meetings, the Multicultural Student Services (MSS) listserv, and the internal newsletter. It is not clear to what extent University initiatives are shared and discussed.
- ❖ For faculty, two town meetings have been held to discuss climate issues and a theatre troupe engaged the faculty with a series of vignettes. *Response: Staff members were also included in these professional development activities.* Again, it is not clear if University-level initiatives were discussed.
- ❖ The director of Multicultural Student Services reports to the dean and is primarily responsible for student recruitment and retention.
- ❖ The Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee, established in 2002, focuses on faculty and staff issues such as climate, professional development, and curricular change.
- ❖ More information on the progress in developing diversity-related SRTE items would be helpful.
- ❖ Best practices include the use of a theatre group, regular meetings with director and dean, faculty involvement with mentoring programs, and the "Difficult Dialogue."

Response: We recognize the importance of University initiatives and work to communicate these to the relevant constituent groups.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
- ❖ Visible support for diversity is demonstrated in a wide variety of ways, including relationships with HBCUs; commitment to providing developing teachers with experience working with people from cultures other than their own; and encouraging faculty and staff to serve on the Commissions for equity.
- ❖ A Spanish language version of the Web site is available.
- ❖ A number of resources are available for identifying climate issues, and a climate survey was conducted during spring 2003.
- ❖ It is positive that the College responds to climate issues and dealing with issues directly by taking advantage of University resources, including the senior faculty mentor. It is not clear how staff issues are resolved.

❖ Results of the climate survey indicate students are reluctant to speak out. It is positive that the College acknowledges the need to address this high priority concern.

❖ College-wide and department level approaches to climate include councils and committees as well as the development of "Difficult Dialogues" initiated two years ago where students and faculty work closely to share views about diversity; again, it is not clear what is available for staff.

❖ Best practices include partnerships with HBCUs and HSIs; Difficult Dialogues; a standing Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee; town meetings; and various communications vehicles for students from underrepresented groups.

Response: We recognize the importance of including staff and we have included staff in the surveys and professional development activities that have been sponsored by the College.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

❖ Ongoing recruitment efforts include involvement with the University's efforts and College initiatives such as Summer College Opportunity Program in Education (SCOPE). Over the past year, the College's presence in high schools has been strengthened.

❖ Changes are planned in the design of undergraduate programs to be more attractive to students from underrepresented groups and to provide white students with diversity-related skills.

❖ The College is encouraged to consider ways to increase the participation of male undergraduate students and the reasons behind shifts in the enrollment of students from underrepresented groups.

❖ Successful graduate recruitment programs have included HBCU and HSI partnerships and MSS collaborative endeavors as well as five Thomas Puksar graduate assistantships awarded to students whose ethnic, cultural, and/or national background contributes to the diversity of the student body. The College acknowledges that declines in graduate students from underrepresented groups warrant further attention.

❖ To retain undergraduate students, the Office of Multicultural Student Services aims to decrease student isolation; in addition, two new student organizations have been developed (Multicultural Education Student Association and Peer Mentor Network). Academic progress is monitored.

❖ To retain graduate students, orientation programs, mentoring programs, financial assistance for travel, and individualized counseling are just a few of the approaches.

❖ Best practices include mentoring, specialized services, financial support, and personalizing campus visits for prospective students.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

❖ The College has had success increasing the number of women faculty and faculty from underrepresented groups. Description of how this success has been achieved would be helpful.

❖ High quality mentoring is reported to be the most effective means of retaining faculty. More information is needed to assess effectiveness.

❖ No information was given on recruiting or retention efforts for staff.

❖ The College reports progress in recruiting tenure line hires, but does not specify the profile of those hires or any special processes that attracted them to Penn State. Good progress is also reported in the percentage of women faculty across ranks. Information about how many were retained and how many were new hires would be helpful. Little progress was reported in the update with respect to hiring faculty from underrepresented groups.
Response: We believe the review committee is referring to staff rather than faculty in the preceding sentence since it is in the staff category that we have struggled to make new hires from underrepresented groups.

❖ Best practices include involvement of the dean and a member of the Affirmative Action Office with search committees, and personalizing campus visits of candidates. More information about mentoring effectiveness may establish it as a best practice.

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

❖ Thirty-three courses, the majority of which are at the graduate level, place special emphasis on diversity topics. The College is encouraged to address this disparity in the balance between undergraduate and graduate education.

❖ Special field placement programs deal explicitly with diversity issues, for example, LifeLink brings advanced special education students to campus.

❖ According to the Department of Education Policy Studies, at least 70 percent of the faculty conduct research on issues related to diversity. Faculty members also have interests in counseling issues, multicultural students, and the role of education in Democratic societies. A list of publications would be helpful.

Response: A complete list of publications is available each year from our Research and Scholarship Report that is prepared by the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies.

❖ Diversity is integrated into the curriculum in three ways: special courses; encouragement for all faculty to build diversity content into their courses; and shifting field courses to expose students to diverse settings.

❖ Best practices include proactive curriculum reviews, integration of diversity content across the curriculum, and creation of innovative field experiences.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

❖ The College continues in efforts to provide leadership development opportunities for members of underrepresented groups and has supported the successful nominations of two men from underrepresented groups for the Administrative Fellows program.

❖ A number of significant administrative appointments of women and members of underrepresented groups have been made. Information on the profile of the College's leadership would be helpful.

❖ College governance processes have led to the selection of faculty from underrepresented groups as leaders.

❖ There was no mention of diversity training for members of the majority group.

Response: Our approach to diversity training has been inclusive and we have invited all members of the College faculty and staff to participate.

❖ The Review Team noted that the College's approach of "encouraging participation and making it possible for individuals to serve in the roles" appears to be a passive approach.

Response: We have been quite proactive in identifying promising talent and encouraging participation.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

❖ Positive examples of organizational change and systems of accountability include the redesign of the Office of Multicultural Student Services; focusing the Puksar Endowment on students from underrepresented groups; development of new partnerships with universities around the world; redesign of the courses in comparative education program; making the Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee a standing committee; leadership involvement with search committees; and expansion of the dean's Student Advisory Forum.

❖ Creation of department committees to address diversity issues is a best practice.