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**Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003
Commonwealth College**

The Review Team notes the positive efforts made by the new leadership of the College and encourages further documentation of the central leadership's actions in support of diversity. Because there is such a broad range of locations, the College's central administration should develop a mechanism for identifying and sharing best practices, support, communication, and response throughout the College, and to institute clearly defined minimum expectations for the College and its units.

Response: Geographic dispersion does present real challenges. Our matrix style of management addresses these through regular meetings by occupation (such as Chief Executive Officers, Directors of Student Affairs, Finance Officers), as well as annual retreats for each major occupational group across the college, extending from CEOs to Staff Assistants. Each session provides a forum for exchanging best practices and expanding diversity awareness. A considerable challenge for the College is that in the absence of central directive there is little collaborative spirit among the locations. The list of action items indicates awareness of the need for specific strategies to foster diversity within the geographically dispersed College. The College is encouraged to develop an overarching vision, plan and assessment mechanism for the Units within the College. Areas needing special attention are Challenge 3, Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body, and Challenge 6, Diversifying University Leadership and Management. *Response: This June the College will hold a three-day retreat for CEOs, campus enrollment managers, Associate Deans, and staff in related areas. This will include experts from other units within Penn State and from the outside, notably one to share extensive research on youth culture developed with funding from the Department of Defense. A measure of success in the second area is that three-quarters of the finalists for our three searches for Directors of Academic Affairs are from under-represented groups.*

Throughout the report "diversity" does not seem to address disabilities, sexual orientation, etc. Particularly in regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is a need for educating campus communities about procedures necessary for compliance. *Response: While the update did not reflect the level of activity, Commonwealth College (CWC) locations have in fact been expending effort and resources on issues of disability and compliance with the ADA. Examples include: ADA facility audits and concomitant facility renovations and upgrades (curb cuts, parking, TTY telephones, visual alarms, repositioned drinking fountains and library space); learning center specialists to work with students with learning disabilities; Kurtzweil readers for students with sight disabilities; provision of sign language interpreters; and regular workshops for faculty and staff. One location sponsored a "Disability Awareness Week," and the Student Government Association has added a senator for students with disabilities to ensure that the SGA is knowledgeable of issues.*

Concurrent with reporting on the progress to the "Framework," the CWC was preparing a new strategic plan. The analysis conducted for the "Framework" response helped identify a number of action items which were incorporated into the Commonwealth College Strategic Plan. These items are referenced in boldface italics below the Review Team's comments.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ It is positive that each campus has a definition of diversity, although the quality of definitions varies. The College's goal of developing a College-wide definition is strongly encouraged.
- ❖ There should be examples of how diversity is demonstrated at a central level, and centralized approaches to establishing some measure of uniformity for diversity efforts across the College.

Response: Goal E.3 of the Strategic Plan states that the College will improve its focus as a unified college rather than the legacy of a federation. Diversity initiatives are included in items that need more unification.

- ❖ The College is encouraged to reach its goal of establishing guidelines for establishing a diversity team at each location that includes the CEO and campus leaders. A mechanism for a College-wide diversity committee and communication between each location and central leadership should be developed.

Response: Goal A.2.f of the College strategic plan states that ongoing diversity teams will be established at each location to lead programming and response. Establishment of these groups will provide the basis for a College-wide committee.

- ❖ With College-wide leadership for diversity shared among the three Associate Deans and Director of Human Resources, their roles and mechanisms for their coordination and communication with campus structures should be made explicit.

Response: Goal E.3.e of the College strategic plan states that functions of the College administration will be examined and coordinated. This examination will include the diversity function.

- ❖ Delaware County, McKeesport, Mont Alto, and New Kensington would benefit from establishing a diversity committee and formal structures to assess climate, facilitate creation of welcoming climate, respond to campus issues, and offer visible support for diversity. Fayette would benefit from a multicultural coordinator. Shenango should offer mechanisms for identifying and responding to climate issues; include more information on diversity workshops within departments; specify what is meant by the statement that the student government “look different” from most; and should provide documentation of the activities of the multicultural coordinator.
- ❖ Several campuses have positive responses to this challenge: The Diversity Team at DuBois provides a good model of seeking out innovative strategies and programming to address the needs of a specific campus. Fayette’s Diversity Task Force is a priority in campus strategic planning and includes faculty, staff and administration. McKeesport does a good job of distributing information about diversity. Worthington-Scranton’s diversity committee is a standing committee of the faculty senate and includes faculty, staff, students, and administrators, including the CEO; awareness of the importance of diversity must extend beyond this standing committee.

Response: Regular meetings of the CEOs provide an opportunity for sharing such “best practices” and an incentive for them to be adopted elsewhere.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ It is positive that the College has committed to conducting the climate survey at all locations. The College should also develop mechanisms for follow-up and for continued monitoring of climate.

Response: Goal A.2.a of the College strategic plan states that climate assessments will be completed at all locations and a climate enhancement plan will be developed.

- ❖ The College should consider a systematic response mechanism that takes into account the geographical location of the campuses to identify and respond to climate issues.
Response: Goal A.2.f. of the College strategic plan states that each diversity committee will have guidelines for response mechanisms.
- ❖ Several campuses have positive responses to this challenge: The Cultural Luncheon Series at DuBois is positive; Fayette's critical instant response informing the entire campus community when incidents occur is a potential "best practice" although Fayette would benefit from mechanisms for identifying underlying climate issues. The Academic Support Specialist role at Hazleton is positive. Wilkes-Barre's Campus Environment Team is proactive in emphasizing improvement of climate and inclusivity.
Response: Fayette implemented the climate survey during Spring Semester 2002.
- ❖ Some campuses, such as McKeesport could develop mechanisms for identifying climate issues. The "small community" or "grapevine" approaches cannot be relied upon for satisfactory results and do not necessarily ensure a welcoming campus environment.
Response: McKeesport implemented the climate survey during Spring Semester 2001 and is identifying and following through on items identified in the survey.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ While recruiting and retention must be addressed on a location by location basis, this should not preclude College-wide guidelines for aggressive recruiting and retention.
Response: Goals A.1.d and A.1.e of the College strategic plan state that the College will have a balance of traditional and non-traditional students and it will "expand the share of traditionally under-represented groups in the student body by 10% across the college, and enhance student diversity by campus location." Goal A.1.f of the strategic plan calls for reducing the attrition rate and increasing the graduation rate for all students. As mentioned above, the upcoming retreat will focus on College-wide recruitment and retention. Additionally, the Dean's Office continues to work closely with University offices of enrollment management and public information to develop the necessary marketing research data and tools for aggressive recruitment.
- ❖ Service area boundaries and lack of residence halls have an impact on recruiting and retention. Emphasis on service areas may reinforce a "shire," "parochial," or "silo" mentality which could detract from creating a robust College.
Response: The College would welcome University approval and support to build or expand its dormitories. The service area emphasis was established to promote harmonious working relationships across Penn State's multiple locations.
- ❖ The action item of ensuring mentoring for underrepresented students is positive; strategies for achieving this goal should be outlined.
Response: Goal A.2.d of the College strategic plan states that the College will create support systems to retain under-represented students.
- ❖ The College is encouraged to promote retention of students within the broader Penn State system.
Response: Goal A.4.c of the College strategic plan states that a college-wide orientation program will be developed and implemented for students transitioning to other PSU locations.

- ❖ The College should present more data about strategies to date, successes, and timelines.
Response: The College has already taken steps to enhance its data-mining and analysis capacity.
- ❖ The College could make better use of the opportunity to encourage graduate study among students from underrepresented groups.
- ❖ Talent Search Programs at Beaver, Shenango, and York are a good collaborative strategy, as is Delaware County's use of recruitment centers and outreach to high schools, and York's use of the campus as a site for recruiting and bridge programs. The diversity speaker series at Beaver is positive. McKeesport's retention strategies, particularly Project Success are positive. Shenango's initiative to recruit beyond the Pennsylvania border is positive.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Networking, mentoring and other "informal" strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce are positive. The College should supply more data to support the anecdotal evidence.
- ❖ Women are well represented in administrative and managerial positions.
- ❖ DuBois's practice of formal mentoring for faculty and staff is a good model. York's partnership with Morgan State University is a positive strategy for recruiting.
- ❖ New Kensington should develop proactive mechanisms for recruiting and hiring diverse faculty and staff, and should provide data on their efforts. Wilkes-Barre should consider additional initiatives for retention of diverse faculty and staff, and include supporting data for the strategies mentioned.

Response: Goal A.2.b of the Strategic Plan states the College (and campuses) will create annual recruiting plans that place emphasis on recruiting under-represented groups.

Goal A.2.g of the Strategic Plan states that the College will continue its search committee training and will appoint diversity advocates to search committees.

Goal A.2.c of the Strategic Plan states that a Dean's Incentive Fund will be created to support hiring staff and non-tenured faculty from under-represented groups.

Goal A.2.d of the Strategic Plan states that support systems to retain under-represented groups will be created.

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

- ❖ The College should provide data and examples such as how many presentations and programs were offered.
- ❖ Some locations are doing a good job on this challenge, for example the Cultural Luncheon Series at DuBois. The College should consider initiating a coordinating committee to share best practices and facilitate collaborative activities.

Response: The regular meetings of the Directors of Academic Affairs include these efforts.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ Inclusion of members of underrepresented groups in strategic planning committees, campus senates and College senate is a potential “best practice.”
- ❖ It is positive that the College supports leadership development by hiring those who have completed leadership training such as the Administrative Fellows Program. The College has opportunity for improving targeting members of underrepresented groups and mentoring programs.
- ❖ Some locations, such as Fayette, Hazleton, and New Kensington could do more to cultivate future leaders, with the exception of Worthington-Scranton, which cites some promising initiatives.
Response: Goal A.2.b of the College strategic plan states that recruiting plans will be developed that have an emphasis on under-represented groups. These plans will include management-level positions.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ Instituting the climate survey at all locations and including follow up surveys and focus groups is positive.
- ❖ It is also positive that all performance evaluations include a diversity component, although a system of accountability is unclear.
Response: Goal A.6.i of the Strategic Plan states that administrator and faculty performance reviews will include outcomes on diversity.
- ❖ It is unclear how the three Associate Deans and Director of Human Resources (the four individuals identified as sharing responsibilities for diversity leadership within the College) promote change.
Response: Goal E.3.e of the Strategic Plan states that roles and functions of the Dean’s Office will be examined and coordinated. Diversity roles will be part of the examination.