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< <http://www.equity.psu.edu/framework/updates> >

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

The College of Communications has made significant progress implementing *A Framework to Foster Diversity: 1998-2001*. They have successfully increased numbers of students and faculty from underrepresented groups and have contributed in thoughtful ways to the diversity agenda for the University community. It is difficult to assess the extent to which specific goals from 1998 have been met as they were not articulated clearly in the original plan. However, the college has a clear and public commitment to diversity as boldly evidenced by their promotion of the multicultural coordinator to Assistant Dean for Multicultural Affairs. Given the depth and breadth of that position, one of the first recommendations of the team was increasing the staff in this office.

While the college appears to be focused on recruiting and retaining African and African American students, attention could be given to other populations. The diversity of the faculty also needs continued attention. Given that the student population is more female than male, an examination of faculty recruitment procedures might be useful. Indeed, the continued absence of women faculty at the professor rank is of concern. The breadth of the college's definition of diversity could be expanded to incorporate other groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. While there has been notable success in increasing scholarship funds for students, other areas of student focus were suggested by the assessment team, such as developing closer connections between student groups, involving students (both majority and minority) in recruiting trips to historically black colleges and universities, and enhancing internships.

Observations and suggestions relating to each challenge are listed below.

Challenge 1: Developing a shared and inclusive understanding of diversity

- ❖ The college's definition of diversity includes reasonable representation from different minority groups, countries, and cultures; reasonable gender balance; diversity in curriculum content; and providing a supportive climate for different minority groups and cultures.
- ❖ The Assistant Dean for Multicultural Affairs has increased opportunities for diversity enhancement through regular student social gatherings and distinguished speaker events. This has been done with modest staff and budget.
- ❖ A 1994 report (attached to the 1998 diversity plan) articulated the intention to establish a Minority Alumni Board of Advisors. It is not evident that this has occurred.

RESPONSE: The College decided years ago not to establish a free-standing Minority Alumni Board of Advisors. Instead, the College, for several years, has worked with special focus committees within its Alumni Society Board of Directors. The assistant dean for multicultural affairs meets regularly with the full Alumni Board, making reports on diversity progress within the College at each Board meeting. As recently as April 2002, the assistant dean reviewed thoroughly with the Board the College's progress on the Framework to Foster Diversity. Diversity is a discussion item at all Alumni Society board meetings. An African-American male chairs the Alumni Society Board's Professional Liaison Committee. The College also has a diverse Board of Visitors.

- ❖ Developing closer connections between diverse student groups (both minority and majority) would enhance existing efforts to develop an all-inclusive definition of diversity.

Challenge 2: Creating a welcoming campus climate

- ❖ The college has made great progress in offering University-wide events and recognizes the need to diversify the audiences who attend.

- ❖ A climate survey was conducted in 2000, but there was no mention of the ways in which the data will be used in the future.
- ❖ While staff are encouraged to pursue professional development opportunities, it would be helpful to see the link to diversity enhancement.
- ❖ Specific attention is not placed on the climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, faculty, and staff. Linking to the climate survey data may be helpful.

RESPONSE: The College will continue to infuse relevant aspects of its recent climate survey in future activities and programming. In addition, the College will formally expand its written definition of diversity to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender matters.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and retaining a diverse student body

- ❖ The college has an impressive history of partnering with minority high schools and historically black colleges and universities to enhance recruitment of students of color. These students appear to be primarily African and African American. This model could be used to focus on other under-represented populations as well. Such partnerships have led to the diversification of the student body and created long term channels for sustaining that commitment.

RESPONSE: The College will, of course, make every effort to continue, in its partnering efforts, to focus on all under-represented groups. The College always has reached out to Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and American Indians whenever possible. The diverse Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg school districts long have been part of the College's diversity outreach efforts.

- ❖ The Assistant Dean for Multicultural Affairs meets regularly with student groups and one-on-one with students from underrepresented groups; these activities most likely contribute to the 80-90 percent retention rates.
- ❖ The Assistant Dean for Multicultural Affairs devotes 30 hours per week in academic advising to students of underrepresented groups. This leaves little time for him to devote to other important activities such as recruitment, high school and college visits, planning, speaker series, and student organizations. Enhanced staffing of his office could be considered.
- ❖ The college has a very successful peer mentoring program.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce

- ❖ Specifics about recruitment and retention strategies directed at women and members of underrepresented groups might help the larger University community.
- ❖ Lack of senior faculty who are female and from underrepresented groups may affect any current or future climate issues.
- ❖ While the college has taken some steps, the staff is not diverse and it is not clear what specific action is planned to improve the situation.
- ❖ Collegiality has been facilitated by establishing relationships in countries such as South Africa, China, India, and Bulgaria. Establishing Hispanic/Latino relationships may contribute to this effort.
- ❖ It was mentioned that a combination of retention strategies are used, but detail is needed.

Challenge 5: Developing a curriculum that supports the goals of our new general education plan

- ❖ The college has done a good job of listing diversity-specific and diversity-related courses. Clearly, much time and energy has been devoted to diversifying the curriculum.
- ❖ There was an impressive list of the faculty's research interests related to diversity.
- ❖ Seminars and speakers supported by the college are inclusive and diverse.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University leadership and management

- ❖ There does not appear to be any programs specifically aimed at members of underrepresented groups that would facilitate promotion.

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- ❖ There are no specific plans to address how women and minority faculty will advance to the ranks of academic department heads or other leadership positions in the college.
- ❖ Also, there are no specific plans to address the ways in which the trend of decreasing minority staff will be reversed.

RESPONSE: Actually, there is no trend in the College of decreasing minority staff. At present, the College has four minority staff members (approximately 10 percent). Four is the most the College ever has had.

Challenge 7: Coordinating organizational change to support our diversity goals

- ❖ The position of Multicultural Coordinator was elevated to Assistant Dean, thereby having the authority and time to be highly effective in helping the college reach their goals, particularly with respect to students. By creating the position of Assistant Dean for Multicultural Affairs, the college had to reallocate resources.
- ❖ Tremendous progress has been made in developing scholarship funds; in 1992-93, \$1,450 was available compared to \$65,000 in 2001-2002.
- ❖ The college has tenured three women and one minority male since 1998.
- ❖ The number of full-time minority faculty members has increased from four in 1994 to ten in 2001.
- ❖ It was not clear how international students were identified and recruited.