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

The College of Education states that it is firmly committed to advancing Penn State's diversity agenda. The review committee felt that the college sincerely addressed each of the questions that were posed for each of the seven challenges. The update begins with "The College of Education at Penn State is fundamentally committed to creating a climate that nurtures and enhances the work of its increasingly diverse population of faculty, staff, and students." One of the ways this commitment takes life is in the search process, where affirmative action procedures are put in place to develop diverse pools of candidates, including search committee accountability to the dean when the pools are not diverse.

Given the strong support expressed in the Update for conducting proactive searches, concern was expressed by the review team about the recruitment and retention of faculty and administrators from underrepresented groups. One academic administrator was female in 2000 and there were no administrators from underrepresented groups at that time. In the full professor rank, seven of the 38 professors were female in 2000. As Education is a predominantly female field, the college may want to examine the ways in which they could more effectively attract female faculty, especially in the higher ranks.

RESPONSE: We are committed to hiring the very best candidates for all of our positions, and we search diligently for outstanding candidates from underrepresented groups. We have made 28 new tenure line faculty appointments during the past three years and 17 or 61% of these appointments went to women. Four of these women were appointed as associate or full professors with immediate tenure. Eight or 29% of the 28 appointments went to members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

A number of initiatives are mentioned, such as the new summer opportunity program to attract high school students, the expansion of outreach efforts to reach international clientele, and the development of partnerships with other universities such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions—all of which sound interesting, but their impact is difficult to assess without more detail.

RESPONSE: It is difficult to provide additional detail since a number of these programs are just beginning. We mention them in our report since we think they reflect the College's commitment to moving forward with its diversity enhancing efforts.

Given the decrease in the number of students from underrepresented groups (with the exception of international students), an analysis of the effectiveness of recruiting practices may be especially timely.

RESPONSE: We agree and this analysis is underway.

Since a Diversity Committee currently does not exist, the review team recommends that the college establish a permanent committee to examine diversity issues, with a clear relationship to the Planning Task Force or whatever group is charged with that planning function.

RESPONSE: The College of Education has a long history of working with a standing Diversity/Climate committee, and we are in the process of redesigning its form and function. Our elected Faculty Council is directly involved in this process and held a forensic session on March 21, 2002 to discuss the revised charge and design for the Committee. We expect the renewed committee to be appointed by the end of the spring 2002 semester. The renewed committee will include faculty, staff, and student members.

That task force made a number of recommendations, but the status of each of the recommendations is not clear. Consideration should be given to appointing an

Assistant/Associate Dean for Multicultural Affairs to attend to the diversity issues for faculty and staff.

Observations and suggestions relating to each challenge are listed below.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ The definition is broad, but could be expanded to acknowledge the special responsibility the college has in training the teachers of tomorrow to work with all types of students—for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and those from various cultures and religions; there appear to be some inconsistencies in the strategies outlined for each challenge with the definition.

RESPONSE: We make deliberate and explicit reference to “gender identity” in our definition and intend this term to be encompassing with respect to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues.

- ❖ MOSAIC, a college newsletter, includes information on diversity in higher education and provides a forum for the dean to share his perspective; defining the audience for the magazine would help in the understanding of the breadth of dissemination.

RESPONSE: The audience for Mosaic is the entire College. We see it as a means of helping the entire College to understand diversity related issues.

- ❖ The role of the multicultural coordinator was expanded to become the Director of the Office of Multicultural Student Services, reporting to the dean and having increased outreach and counseling (non-academic) responsibilities.

- ❖ There currently is no Diversity Committee and there is some ambiguity over the role of the Planning Task Force.

RESPONSE: The Planning Task Force’s recommendations are being incorporated into the new design for the Diversity Committee and we expect the renewed Committee to be appointed by the end of the spring 2002 semester.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ It appears that there are student concerns about climate in the college that are not related to diversity; mechanisms have been put in place to encourage students to voice their concerns to college leadership.
- ❖ The programs described in this section, while useful for teacher preparation, seem for the most part unrelated to climate in the college.
- ❖ Responses to climate issues are described with respect to general issues in the climate, not diversity issues specifically.

RESPONSE: We integrate diversity issues into our on-going efforts to strengthen a healthy sense of community within the College.

- ❖ It would be helpful to provide more details about professional development opportunities to sensitize leadership, as this is an issue all units across Penn State are facing.

RESPONSE: We describe the diversity workshops we have conducted during the recent past in our report and will be providing additional opportunities in the future.

- ❖ It is unclear how much discretion and independence the Director of Multicultural Student Affairs and Coordinator of Human Resources may have from the dean in directly resolving climate issues.

RESPONSE: *We handle these matters on a case-by-case basis and the dean becomes directly involved when the matter is not covered neatly by existing policy and/or where the parties are unable to reach agreement.*

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Team members expressed strong concern over the language used in this section, specifically "...not all of the students who seek entrance into the field offer strong academic credentials." This could be interpreted as indicating that students from underrepresented groups are less academically prepared than white students.

RESPONSE: *It was not our intention to suggest that students from underrepresented groups are less academically prepared than white students, and we have removed this sentence from our report.. The entire field of education is setting higher standards for admission into professional preparation programs. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is implementing new requirements for teacher certification that require a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 for admission to, retention in, and exist from professional preparation programs that lead to eligibility for a Pennsylvania certificate. At Penn State, the enrollment controls on our teacher education majors provide automatic admission to those candidates with a 3.0 or greater cumulative grade point average. We believe it is important to have high academic standards for entrance into the field of teaching, and we work hard to provide advising and support services to increase the opportunities for all students to compete successfully for admission into these programs.*

- ❖ A decline has been experienced in the percentage of students from underrepresented groups.
- ❖ The college describes a number of initiatives to attract students from underrepresented groups that have not been as successful as they would have liked. Competition for these students is given by the college as a possible reason for lack of recruitment success. They do, however, state that "rather than belabor the reasons that may lie behind the trends, we think it would be more useful to focus on the steps we will be taking toward diversifying the student body within the college." (p. 21)
- ❖ Enhanced scholarship support and collaborations appear to be the most effective recruitment strategies.
- ❖ Graduate students have been offered more networking and social activities designed to promote a sense of community; many are specific to students from underrepresented groups.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Strong affirmative action search techniques are described for faculty searches, including having an Affirmative Action office representative participate in the charge for each committee and provide advice about marketing. Information about the results of these searches would be helpful.

RESPONSE: *Of the 28 tenure line faculty appointments that we have made during the past three years, 8 or 29% went to candidates who are members of underrepresented groups.*

- ❖ Information was not provided pertaining to the diversification of staff.
RESPONSE: Of the 10 staff positions that we filled during the past three years, we hired 8 women and 2 of the appointments went to individuals from underrepresented groups.
- ❖ In a field dominated by women, the college hired three male and only three female professors.
RESPONSE: During the past 3 years we appointed a total of 3 full professors and 2 of these 3 were female. During the same 3 year period, 61% of our tenure line hires (17 out of 28) were women.
- ❖ Four professors of color, two at the associate professor rank with tenure, began in 2001-02.
- ❖ Concern was expressed in the report about the recent resignations of female faculty and difficulties in partner placement was identified as an issue the college could have better handled.
RESPONSE: We are eager to deal more effectively with partner issues. We have been responsive to requests from other Penn State units to locate partners in the College, and we appreciate the assistance we have received when we have made similar requests. We see this as an all-University issue and we look forward to learning more about best practices that will be shared thanks to the work of the Diversity Report Review Committees.
- ❖ Additional reasons for problems retaining female faculty should be identified.
RESPONSE: We have begun to convene informal meetings of female faculty members in the College to discuss concerns that are arising within this group. We believe the insights from this group will help us to have greater success in our efforts to retain female faculty members.

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

- ❖ The college states a commitment to preparing future teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, and therapists to work in culturally diverse settings; material is introduced that is designed to help students gain insight into cultural differences.
- ❖ A list of 30 courses that are examples of courses with significant emphasis on multicultural issues is included. More detail about their specific content is needed, as well as the degree of emphasis on multicultural issues.
RESPONSE: The syllabi for these courses are public documents.
- ❖ While a number of interesting initiatives are mentioned, such as a joint faculty appointment with the College of Liberal Arts and the Women's Studies Program, the Interinstitutional Consortium for Indigenous Knowledge, and the dual title graduate degree program in Comparative Education, not enough specific information is offered to understand the ways in which they contribute to a diverse curriculum.
- ❖ Faculty research that is described tends to be focused more on the legal and technical aspects of diversity (e.g., affirmative action and test measurement) than on the social and cultural implications.
RESPONSE: The College publishes an annual report on the research and scholarship that is conducted by members of the faculty. This report is available on our Web Site at: www.ed.psu.edu/research/reports/2000-2001rsreport.pdf The College's research program includes scholarship that is focused on the social and cultural dimensions of diversity. Indeed, faculty members with a post-modern and cultural-studies orientation to education can be found throughout the College and are among our most productive and best known members of the College faculty.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ It does not appear that there are professional development initiatives directed toward underrepresented groups.
RESPONSE: The College provides professional development initiatives that are directed toward underrepresented groups. For example, we have significantly expanded our

involvement in the Holmes Scholars program which is a national program that provides professional development activities for aspiring teacher educators who are members of underrepresented groups. We have expanded this program by drawing upon the Puksar endowment. In fact, we directed additional College revenue into the Puksar endowment so that we could support the Holmes Scholar activities of Puksar assistantship recipients in each of our Departments. We have also been underwriting the costs of having the College represented in the national leadership of the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME). In addition, we have engaged the services of the Affirmative Action Office and the Commission for Women to meet with and provide workshops for members of the Academic Leadership Team in the College. We also have a member of the Affirmative Action Office meet with each tenure line faculty search committee that we establish for the purpose of educating the committee about diversity issues.

- ❖ While it is commendable that there are a number of college faculty in leadership positions on University-level committees, this is most likely not a direct initiative of the college but due to the individual.
RESPONSE: The College has been quite active in encouraging this participation by preparing nominations and by providing release time.
- ❖ It would be helpful to describe the ways in which the Director of Multicultural Student Services participates in the academic leadership team of the college.
RESPONSE: The Director of Multicultural Student Services reports directly to the Dean of the College and is a member of the College's Leadership Team. The Director is an active participant in discussions that lead to decisions about the future growth of the College. The Director is also a member of the Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee that is being formed. In addition, the Director is also included in the meetings the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies has with the Professors-in-Charge of our Graduate Programs.
- ❖ Three women have been promoted to positions of leadership, including the Associate Dean for Outreach, Cooperative Extension, Technology, and International Programs; Head of Department of Education Policy Studies; and Distinguished Professor of Education.
RESPONSE: Women have also been appointed recently to key administrative positions in the College, including the Director of Development, the Coordinator of Alumni Affairs, the Coordinator of the Education Technology Center, and the Financial Officer for the College.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

- ❖ The role of the Multicultural Coordinator was elevated to that of Director of Multicultural Student Services, reporting directly to the dean.
- ❖ The budget of that office increased by 39 percent, although the base of this budget needs to be known to best understand the increase.
- ❖ A major endowment fund to support students from underrepresented groups has been established.
- ❖ While financial support systems for faculty research have been developed, they do not seem to be targeted specifically at faculty from underrepresented groups or in support of diversity-related research.
- ❖ Search committee guidelines have been enhanced to highlight affirmative action procedures.

Rejoinder:

We wish to thank the Feedback Review Committee for its efforts and we appreciate having the benefit of the feedback. In our report, our goal was to speak frankly about both the progress we are making and the challenges that remain. We believe the forthcoming list of best practices that is being prepared will be very useful as we work to make additional progress.