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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 Engineering**

The College of Engineering (COE) submitted a comprehensive Diversity Update report that suggests a thorough understanding of the need to diversify. COE lists specific goals and provides examples of efforts made toward achieving those goals. A goal stated in the 1998 report was to be among the top three Big Ten universities in recruiting and retention. The top schools have a minority representation of between 13 to 19%. The College of Engineering points out that according to the 2001 Census, the demographics of the commonwealth are 10% African American, 3.2% Hispanic/Latino, and .1% American Indian, thus making this 13% attainable. The College is also thinking intelligently about assessment indicators. COE sees it as not just tracking statistics, but “monitoring the degree to which diversity is understood and internalized.” This thought could be implemented with a survey or other research. The varied programs for improving underrepresented undergraduate student recruitment/retention, and climate are sound, but are less effective for faculty and graduate students of color. The recruitment and retention programs for staff continue to be ineffective. More efforts are needed in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.

Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity

- ❖ COE’s diversity statement describes the College’s goals in the context of how it compares to other schools in the Big Ten, and other comparable research universities.
- ❖ Two longstanding and successful programs described are the Minority Engineering Program and the Women in Engineering Program.
- ❖ COE places emphasis on preparing students for the “global workplace.”
- ❖ Teaching assistants in COE are instructed on sensitivity to diversity.
- ❖ A video program, “In Their Own Words” was developed by the Leonhard Center and currently utilized in diversity training workshops for members of the College of Engineering.
- ❖ Information on the University’s diversity initiatives is distributed to faculty and staff through the offices of the department heads.
- ❖ The Director of the Minority Engineering Program coordinates student initiatives and also assists with minority faculty hiring, orientation, and advancement.
- ❖ The diversity committee, or Climate Committee meets “several times a year”, but details about its functions are not well defined.

RESPONSE: Details of the role and function of the Committee are provided in the answer to question #5 of Challenge 1. The principal function of the Committee is to review and evaluate the broad spectrum of diversity initiatives, design and/or recommend appropriate assessment strategies to evaluate progress in the College and make recommendations to the Dean. The Committee has been instrumental in developing diversity surveys, proposing ways to disseminate the College’s policies and procedures for addressing incidents or reports of harassment, and promoting professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to increase their awareness of diversity issues.

- ❖ Although the College of Engineering does not provide a definition of diversity, its vision statement and goals provide a context for how the College views diversity initiatives.

Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate

- ❖ A welcoming climate is stressed in the College's core values. For example, the department of Chemical Engineering states that "Respect for our students is paramount." and "Collegiality, civility, and cooperation are hallmarks of a successful and well integrated faculty."
- ❖ There is a stated protocol for diversity complaints.
- ❖ COE provides examples of college-wide and individualized approaches to enhance climate such as social events, women speakers at commencement, escorts for newcomers, and faculty information on addressing students' learning needs without making students feel singled out.
- ❖ COE has not conducted a climate survey since 1995-96.
RESPONSE: The Diversity Committee has recommended that a new climate survey be developed and conducted. While work on this was suspended during the comprehensive study by the Task Force to address progress on the "Framework," the Committee will resume its role in this project in the coming academic year, as indicated in the Report under Challenge 2.

Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Recruitment is a "key activity" "subject to continuous re-engineering and refinement."
- ❖ Many examples of processes and activities are presented.
- ❖ Retention techniques include community-building projects such as a picnic reception (this year attended by 175 of 260 ethnic students). Also, mentoring programs, scholarships, etc. are described.
- ❖ Strategies that provide "insider" information are most successful. Also, efforts are being made to make the first year curriculum more user-friendly to underrepresented groups.
- ❖ International graduate student enrollment is high, 62% in 2000.
- ❖ Retention rates for women have approached that of men.
- ❖ Undergraduate minority enrollment (COE ranked 23 among the 26 top-ranked engineering colleges) and graduate student minority enrollment (8% in Fall 1997, 5% in Fall 2000) do not reflect the efforts (resources and programs) described to increase these enrollments.
RESPONSE: The minority representation in engineering is typically reported only for African American, Hispanic, and Native Americans, and the total for these groups has held steady at about 3%. The decline indicated in the above, University-reported figures, is due almost exclusively to reductions in the Asian American percentages. Nationally, the number of students of color entering graduate school fell steadily through the late 1990's and began to increase only in the last one or two years.
- ❖ COE strives to stress gender-balanced rather than gender-exclusive offerings.
- ❖ COE is directing internal resources to supplement other scholarship programs in an effort to recruit underrepresented students.

Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ❖ Faculty recruitment uses professional networks and national advertising.
- ❖ Examples of programs to help retain faculty and staff include faculty/graduate networking lunches, New Faculty Workshop, and the Engineering Administrative Fellows Program.

- ❖ COE claims that staff recruitment is restricted by university policies.
RESPONSE: This refers to the fact that there may be a need to search more broadly for staff where there are concentrations of candidates from underrepresented groups.
- ❖ There was a net increase in senior women faculty in the period examined. There is a very brief mention of tech-service. According to the statistics, from Fall 1997 to Fall 2000, nineteen new tech service jobs were created. White men filled almost all positions.

RESPONSE: In fact, all but three of these positions were already occupied, and simply represent a transfer of the budget home for personnel from Intercollege Research Programs (IRP's) to the College. They therefore did not represent an opportunity to increase diversity among the tech service ranks. A regrettable lack of attention was given to recruitment, retention, and development of underrepresented staff, especially in light of UPC comments provided to COE in 1998.

RESPONSE: The College's HR representative and Associate Dean for Administration and Planning work closely with departments to make sure that best practices are followed in advertising, screening and hiring processes. There was an increase in faculty numbers in the period examined without a concurrent increase in the numbers of underrepresented faculty.

- ❖ Despite the small pool of candidates, COE is employing successful strategies for recruiting women faculty. These strategies are not as successful when recruiting minority faculty.

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

- ❖ COE has developed first-year seminars that target female and minority engineering students.
- ❖ COE uses gender-balancing and cluster courses in the difficult first-year engineering design course, like those that exist in the calculus and physics courses, to enhance female and minority student performance.
- ❖ COE created a college-wide task group to recommend and implement programs that will broaden students' understanding of global, societal, ethical and professional aspects of engineering.
- ❖ The "recommended actions" for this challenge do not include any identification of who would be responsible nor how the actions would be implemented.

RESPONSE: The recommended actions pertain primarily to the advising system and curricular/co-curricular content and activities in the College. The leadership for the advising system and broader student services comes from the Undergraduate Studies and Student Services, and the College encourages curricular reforms through the Leonhard Center and Academic Council. A workshop is scheduled for this summer (in collaboration with the Rock Ethics Institute), for instance, that will provide training for faculty on how to incorporate engineering ethics into the learning outcomes of courses they teach in the major. Faculty will receive supplemental salary and seed funds for developing and carrying out curricular elements in this area. Similar approaches will be applied in to promote diversity programming embedded in the curriculum.

- ❖ The web-based senior exit survey lacks a specific question about how well the COE curriculum prepared students regarding diversity issues, not just the broad question about "preparation in understanding global and societal issues."

RESPONSE: This is true. The Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies will see to it that this is addressed in the survey beginning with the Summer 2002 graduating seniors.

Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management

- ❖ The COE Administrative Fellows program for staff has been successful in training and promoting women to higher staff grades.
- ❖ There is a general weakness in the discussion and approaches indicated to address this challenge. There is nothing presented that addresses the lack of leadership/management training and opportunities, specifically for minority faculty.

RESPONSE: Department heads work carefully and thoughtfully with minority faculty to identify career opportunities and insure that they are not overburdened with service responsibilities.

Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals

❖ COE has a good track record of acquiring external dollars to expand and support their student recruitment/retention initiatives and programs.

❖ COE has increased the number of staff positions in the MEP and WEP.

❖ COE has/is expanded/-ing and renovated/-ing space for MEP and WEP.

❖ The report acknowledges that the increased financial support for MEP and WEP comes from “soft” dollars, but no specific strategy was presented for converting this to “hard” dollars.

RESPONSE: This is a laudable, although unrealistic goal. EVERY and ALL support programs in the College are highly leveraged with external (grant and other) funding, including the Advising Center (two of the five full-time staff, for instance), Co-operative Education (three of six staff), the Leonhard Center, the Learning Factory, the Center for Electronic Design, Communication and Computing, Summer Programs, the academic Minors, and the departments, research centers and faculty themselves. Procuring grants and other support for various programs and to contribute to the program infrastructure is an expected, encouraged and rewarded activity. The College provides matching funds to help with the stability and sustainability of positions associated with externally funded projects.

❖ There is also no indication that a system of accountability exists with respect to diversity issues, which in part may be attributed to COE’s suggestions that it is concerned about eliciting the “backlash” of the majority.

RESPONSE: Accountability is explicitly covered in the discussions between the Dean and department heads in each year’s review of the department’s accomplishments. The issue of potential “backlash” was in reference to students’ reactions if they feel they have no access to specific or specially-designed curricular offerings; hence, gender balancing and other measures that insure a more inclusive approach are preferred.