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**Feedback on Progress Implementing  
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003  
College of Health and Human Development**

The report from the College of Health and Human Development has many strengths, though improvement is possible in several areas. The report provides specific and concrete examples of the College's progress in implementing the *Framework*, and some of its initiatives exemplify best practice. The report indicates that the College has had some notable successes in recruiting faculty from diverse racial/ethnic groups, and the public leadership of the new dean is commendable. The College appears to have made good progress in implementing its strategic plan for diversity, and the report cites the accomplishments of many individuals. However, these accomplishments do not appear to be tied to organizational responsibility. The re-positioning of the director of Diversity Enhancement Programs to a direct reporting line to the dean is especially noteworthy and indicates a substantial commitment to diversity. This report would be strengthened by the inclusion of more specific demographic data as provided by Educational Equity and the Budget Office. These data show specific progress in faculty recruitment and retention among diverse racial/ethnic groups and provide needed background for conclusions drawn in the report. Also, the names of specific members of the College are cited at various points in the report. Team members question whether, other than naming Dean Coward, this practice is appropriate for the final, public report. Comments on the report under each Challenge follow:

***RESPONSE: The College of Health and Human Development (HHD) wants to express our sincere appreciation for the thoughtful and insightful comments offered by the evaluation team. After carefully considering the feedback from the evaluation team, as well as comments that we received from our own Executive Committee (which includes the dean, associate deans, school directors and department heads) as well as our HHD Diversity Committee, we have modified our original submission (see text highlighted in blue in the revised report). We encourage everyone to read the revised report for our College that is posted elsewhere on this Web site. In the responses below we identify those sections of the revised report that were amended to reflect the feedback that was received.***

**Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity**

- ❖ The definition of diversity is excellent and inclusive of all types of human differences; however, this broad definition seems to be interpreted more narrowly (i.e., a “multicultural” focus) in other sections of the report.
- ❖ The College diversity committee is proactive, sponsoring multiple workshops, visits from distinguished scholars, and recommending the formation of a college diversity award. It is unclear whether or not the six tasks of the diversity committee are typically focused on persons of color. Specifically, does “multicultural” refer to racial/ethnic diversity or is it defined more broadly in the College?
- ❖ It would be helpful to clarify how diversity issues and values are communicated to students.

***RESPONSE: On page 1 of the revised report, we have clarified the terminology that we employ throughout the document. Specifically, we use the term “multicultural” to represent both individuals from racial/ethnic minority populations and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). The terms “diverse backgrounds” and “diversity” are used more broadly to include multicultural students, staff and faculty as well as individuals with physical/learning disabilities, non-traditional aged students, and others from underrepresented groups.***

***On pages 3 and 4 of the revised report (see especially Action Item #1), we describe the efforts that will be made during the next 12 months to promote discussions among faculty, staff and students about the educational importance of enhancing diversity at Penn State.***

***Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate***

- ❖ The College has developed a number of initiatives to augment the climate, including an emphasis on diversity in the dean’s first “State of the College Address,” a “best practices workshop” concerning hiring faculty of color for the College administration and faculty members who chair search committees [this seems to belong with Challenge 4: a dean’s review of faculty candidate pools to insure a diverse pool], and climate surveys among multicultural students and faculty.
- ❖ The College climate could be better assessed by surveying all constituents (i.e., faculty, students, and exempt and nonexempt staff) and insuring that survey items encompass a broad range of diversity topics, including LGBT and disabilities issues. Also, some discussion of how the College plans to respond to the climate surveys would strengthen the report.
- ❖ It might be useful to conceptualize roles for majority members of the College in creating a supportive, welcoming climate.

***RESPONSE: We appreciate the positive feedback that we received about efforts that have been undertaken to date to evaluate and enhance the climate for diverse constituents within the College of Health and Human Development. We also acknowledge the recommendation of the review committee that climate be “assessed by surveying all constituents (i.e., faculty, students, and exempt and nonexempt staff).”***

***However, it is our judgment that our purposes would be best served by continuing along the path that we have already begun. Specifically, during the final year of this planning period, we want to follow-up the faculty survey that was conducted in Spring 2001 using an innovative electronic technique for faculty discussion. See Action Item #4 on page 8 of the revised report for more details. In addition, we want to build on an earlier student survey and conduct a more systematic and comprehensive assessment to explore students’ perceptions about the climate for certain types of diverse students at Penn State and, specifically, within our academic units. See Action Item #5 on page 9.***

***We understand and appreciate the comment by the evaluation team regarding the inclusion of “majority” persons in creating a supportive and welcoming climate on campus. Indeed, we agree fully with the sentiments behind this recommendation and will continue to include a wide range of our faculty, staff and students in our efforts to foster diversity within our College. The College of Health and Human Development is devoted to improving our sensitivity and awareness of the needs of students, staff and faculty from diverse backgrounds.***

**Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body**

- ❖ Diversity Enhancement Programs provide multiple programs and services for multicultural students, but no comparable initiatives seem to be in place for other diversity constituents (i.e., women, LGBT, disabled students) or to engage majority students in retention efforts.
- ❖ Nursing and HR&IM, along with some faculty, have developed recruiting initiatives for students of color, but most departments seem to rely exclusively on the director of Diversity Enhancement Programs to recruit these students to their majors. If this conclusion is not intended, a discussion of faculty and student roles in recruitment would be helpful.

*RESPONSE: The evaluation team is correct in describing the efforts of our Diversity Enhancement Program – we have been focused primarily on recruiting and retaining racial and ethnic minority students. While we are aware that the recruitment and retention of other diverse students can be challenging, our original interpretation of the “Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State” was to concentrate on the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minority students. As we proceed, we will continue to explore methods and strategies for improving our recruitment and retention of a wider range of diverse students. For example, see Action Item #3 on page 8.*

*We regret that the evaluation team was left with the impression that our recruitment and retention efforts are concentrated in only a few of our academic units. That is certainly not the case. While some units have been more active than others, the text on pages 12 through 16 of the revised report allude to the efforts and involvement of all eight of the academic units in our College.*

**Challenge 4: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce**

- ❖ The report identifies accomplishments in recruiting and retaining faculty from diverse racial/ethnic groups, but the lack of data in the report makes it difficult to assess this progress. Other than counter-offers for faculty, no coordinated retention strategies seem to be in place.
- ❖ The focus appears to be on faculty, with some attention being given to nonexempt staff. The report identifies no initiatives for exempt staff. Also, efforts seem focused exclusively on recruiting and retaining people of color and do not address individuals representing other differences.

*RESPONSE: See pages 17 through 19 of the revised report for additional data related to the progress regarding recruiting and retaining a racially and ethnically diverse faculty. The evaluation team is correct in stating that we have had no specific initiatives related to the recruitment of exempt staff, although we have had some success in that regard. The evaluation team is also correct in stating that our workforce efforts to date have been concentrated on the recruitment and retention of persons of color – as opposed to persons from other diverse backgrounds. Our recruiting and retention actions have, however, been in full compliance with the spirit and intent of the “equal opportunity” laws.*

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

- ❖ The report identifies eight courses that have been developed or enhanced with diversity content; however, these courses come from only one school and two departments (out of a total of two schools and six departments). Participation by other schools and departments would enhance the current effort.
- ❖ Visiting minority scholars from academia and industry is a noteworthy component in diversifying the College's course content.
- ❖ The report does not describe an overarching strategy for diversifying the entire curriculum. Perhaps the College could consider developing several disciplinary foci related to "diverse contexts" for incorporation into various College majors (e.g., "human development and family research in diverse contexts").

*RESPONSE: The evaluation team rightly notes that the eight courses listed in our report come from two departments. As a clarification, these were the new courses focused on diversity that had been developed since 1998. There are, however, 17 additional courses that meet the general education requirements for a diversity-focused course that were developed prior to 1998. Please see page 19 of the revised report for a listing of these additional courses.*

*We appreciate the evaluation team's comment regarding our use of visiting minority scholars as an important component of the College's diversity efforts. We intend to continue this practice.*

*By supporting the faculty expertise which exists within our College, and employing the talents and interests of new faculty who are hired, we will continue to expand the number of courses in our curriculum that are focused on multicultural aspects of health and human development. During this final year of the strategic planning period, we will also continue to work on the development of a "minor" focused on the health and human development of vulnerable minority populations. See Action Item #10 on page 21 in the revised report for more detail on this minor.*

***Challenge 6: Diversifying University Leadership and Management***

- ❖ Some commendable actions have been taken to develop leadership skills among diverse faculty and staff, but no College-wide initiatives geared toward positioning faculty and staff for leadership and management opportunities have occurred.

*RESPONSE: Although we have no specific actions to undertake in the final year of this plan that are related to this challenge, we will continue to look for opportunities in which we can foster and mentor faculty and staff from underrepresented groups in developing their leadership and management skills.*

***Challenge 7: Coordinating Organizational Change to Support Our Diversity Goals***

- ❖ The proposed “urban presence” initiatives are commendable. The team sees the potential for innovative learning and research and effective long-term relationships with diverse communities. These initiatives have obvious implications for Challenges 3 and 5 as well. Also, the urban health minor seems to be a very positive prospect, but this discussion could be strengthened by indicating how the minor might articulate with other majors within and outside of the College.
- ❖ Though some obvious efforts are in place, the plan does not address the topic of organizational realignments, systems of accountability, resource mobilization and allocation strategies, or long-term planning strategies as thoroughly as needed.

*RESPONSE: We appreciate the commendation by the evaluation team regarding our urban presence initiatives. We also are excited about the potential for innovative learning opportunities that may arise from these efforts. It is difficult to anticipate how the minor on vulnerable minority populations will resonate with faculty, staff and students from outside the College of Health and Human Development. As the planning for this new curriculum begins to form and take shape over the next three years, we will consult with other units within our College and on campus that are involved in similar initiatives (e.g., the Department of African and African American Studies, the Hamer Center for Community Design Assistance, the Commission for Women, the Commission for Racial/Ethnic Diversity and the Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equity) in order to expand the scope and constituency of these efforts.*

*Throughout the revised report we have addressed specific resource commitments and strategies to foster diversity in the College of Health and Human Development. Additional information about the strategic goals of the College may be found on our Strategic Plan 2002-2005 Web site at <http://www.hhdev.psu.edu/strategic/index.html>*

*Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this feedback. We look forward to working with the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity to make our College and Penn State a community that is welcoming to everyone.*