Feedback on Progress Implementing
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004–09
Potential Best Practices, Mid-point Assessment
Spring 2007

Executive Summary

The Potential Best Practices document highlights potential best practices that were identified by the review teams responsible for evaluating each unit's progress in implementing *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004–09*. Units were asked to self-identify under each Challenge those approaches that they believed to be potential best practices. Best Practices were defined as "processes, programs, and procedures that most successfully lead to the unit's ability to reach the University's diversity goals and can be validated through measurable outcomes." At this mid-point of the 2004–09 *Framework* cycle, substantiating data may be incomplete, so promising practices are identified as "Potential Best Practices." The potential best practices were identified by the review teams from among the practices self-identified by the unit. In some cases potential best practices were also identified from the body of programs and initiatives discussed in the updates, even if not self-identified by the unit as a potential best practice. The full compilation of potential best practices identified by the review teams, arranged by Challenge, can be found at www.equity.psu.edu/framework/updates/docs/07bpfull.pdf.

In analyzing our progress thus far, several overarching themes emerge that can be considered essential to effective planning, assessment, and reporting. Active, visible support from executive leadership is critical to success, both at the unit level and for Penn State as a whole. Broad participation in diversity planning, implementation, and reporting helps to leverage expertise available to the unit and to increase effectiveness. Also, sustaining momentum throughout the planning cycle is critical to greater progress. Best practices identified by the review teams include themes of purposeful, integrated, and collaborative approaches; alignment of diversity planning with general strategic planning; use of appropriate measures; and broad and inclusive communication strategies.

Purposeful, integrated approaches across units, particularly Colleges, coordinating central and department level efforts
- ❖ Integration of academic and student life activities around diversity themes.
- ❖ Response teams that monitor climate and quickly respond to acts of intolerance.
- ❖ Tiered diversity committee structure and empowering committees to actively address and facilitate diversity goals.
- ❖ Coordinated approaches to curricular integration.

Collaborative, participatory approaches within the unit, across the University, and with applicable external resources
- ❖ Retention programs, mentoring, and leadership development programs for students, faculty, staff, and aspiring administrators.
- ❖ Collaborative efforts with Penn State resources (commissions, Affirmative Action Office, LGBTA Student Resource Center, etc.), cross-function support structures, and intercollege partnerships.
- ❖ Collaborative efforts with other institutions (HBCUs, HSIs, Tribal Colleges, and Study Abroad programs).
- ❖ Collaborative efforts with community organizations.

Broad and inclusive communications strategies
- ❖ Use of multiple communication formats (e.g., printed materials, listservs, presentations, Internet, etc.) to disseminate information broadly, including visual displays (photos, videos, etc.) that project Penn State's inclusiveness and the benefits of diversity.
- ❖ Publications such as fact sheets, alumni reports, and business cards that highlight broad aspects of diversity and are widely distributed.
- ❖ Blogs, podcasts, diversity forums, and other venues that engage a range of audience and initiatives.

Alignment between diversity planning and general strategic planning
- ❖ Purposeful alignment of the *Framework* with general strategic plans and other long-range planning.
- ❖ Inclusion of diversity values among core values and competencies.
- ❖ Allocation of resources, including budgetary resources.

Effective measures of success and assessment
- ❖ The use of empirical data in evaluating success.
- ❖ The use of a variety of data sources and available expertise (e.g., national databases, climate assessments, and input from various stakeholders, including alumni).

Active leadership
- ❖ Reorganization of administration to ensure accountability on diversity goals.
- ❖ Facilitation of focus groups, orientations, and diversity forums by the leading executive of the unit.

The full compilation of the potential best practices identified by the review teams, arranged by Challenge, can be found at www.equity.psu.edu/framework/updates/docs/07bpfull.pdf. The potential best practices are unit-specific but often provide information for other units that are interested in adopting and adapting successful practices or gleaning inspiration for new approaches. Additional information about the specific practices listed can be found by accessing the complete feedback report and unit response, as well as the unit update. These materials can be found at www.equity.psu.edu/framework/updates.