

Best Practices in Diversity Strategic Planning
A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004 - 2009
April 24, 2008

Workshop Summary Notes

Welcome

W. Terrell Jones, Vice Provost for Educational Equity

Dr. Jones began by thanking all the participants—their joint efforts have contributed greatly to the success of the Framework to Foster Diversity.

Success of the “Framework”

The *Framework* has received some national attention for being on the cutting edge of diversity strategic planning. Mara Kolesas from UCC Berkeley recently consulted with Educational Equity staff and other administrators regarding her interest in implementing a similar initiative at Berkeley. In addition, administrators from Northern Illinois University claim to have “stolen” all our information about the *Framework* that has been placed for public purview on the Education Equity web site. He emphasized that he encourages this practice, that this is part of the very purpose for placing Educational Equity’s materials on the Web site for public access. Many other representatives from other institutions have called with questions—the most common being “How do you get top administrators to do this?” There are a lot of institutions whose top administrators have simply have not embraced the importance of diversity initiatives to the extent that Penn State’s have. In fact, Dr. Jones admits that he understands that it is the commitment of others, such as the President, the Provost, and those present, that makes his job easier.

Introduction of Visitors

Dr. Jones then introduced visitors: Valerie Dudley, director of the Office of Institutional Diversity, from Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, and M. Njeri Jackson, special assistant to the provost for promoting diversity at the Virginia Commonwealth University. They are here to gather information because they are in the process of developing strategic plans for diversity at their respective institutions.

Research of Darryl Smith

Dr. Jones explained that the *Framework* was developed using the research of Darryl Smith and others—and that he recently got a telephone call from Darryl Smith herself. She had heard from multiple sources about Penn State’s strategic plan and that they were “using a lot of her stuff.” She had heard that Penn State was incorporating her theories into practice and she was encouraged to visit Educational Equity’s Web site. She is very interested in our work, so Dr. Jones offered to host her at our University Park campus in the fall, possibly to attend the fall Best Practices Workshop.

Garden Analogy

Dr. Jones compared the institutionalization of diversity to the kinds of growth in he sees in his garden: The annuals are the new ideas, using funding for “seeding” or “sprouting” such as the

\$20K EOPC grants offered to campuses this spring, of which 8 campuses received most or all of the funding requested. Perennials, however, represent programming initiatives that were planted and took root, and come up every year. These are programs within colleges and campuses that have very little to do with Educational Equity and come instead from the commitment of the colleges and offices while “EE gets to take credit!”

Next Steps

Dr. Jones explained that the second iteration of the *Framework* is coming to a close; at this point, we are looking at what we’ve done and where we are going from here. The process has become more sophisticated and has been expanded to recognize the needs of a greater number of groups, with greater inclusiveness, especially regarding first generation, low income students. We have also made strides in other areas: 1 ½ weeks ago, *Black Issues in Higher Education* recognized that we are 4th or 5th with regard to graduation of African American students at 68%. Within the Big-10, only Michigan graduates African American’s at a slightly higher percentage. In addition, we enjoy a percentage of African American faculty that is greater than the national average.

“Progress Best in the Light”

All of this information appears on our web site to be scrutinized by anyone with interest. This is because progress is best in the light—out in the open for all to see. The light itself becomes an impetus to strive to do better all the time. “Darkness is only good for mushrooms and stagnation!”

Best Practices

Best practices are identified from the unit reports as the things that we, as a university collectively, do well—we list them on Educational Equity’s Web site so that you can look them over and determine if any of them make sense for your college or campus.

A closer look at the reports shows something we already know: there will always be some campuses/colleges/individuals that are further ahead in their progress. However, change within the institutional setting means increasing the minimal expectations for everyone. In Darryl Smith’s publication, *Building Institutional Capacity for Diversity and Excellence*, she calls for institutions to examine what is in place. We have completed the major tuning—now we need to begin fine tuning!

Thank you!

Successes, Challenges, and New Horizons

Rodney Erickson, Executive Vice President and Provost

Dr. Erickson began by acknowledging the significant contributions of Dr. Jones over many years. He also noted that he was pleased to see so much of the University leadership among the workshop participants. Diversity strategic planning has become an integral part of the University; it is of the utmost importance to keep the momentum going. Diversity strategic planning has strong parallels to general university strategic planning: the same things apply—goals, objectives, measures, and a means of accountability. It is critical that units incorporate diversity strategic planning into their overall strategic plans. We still have untapped potential in

this area. There are opportunities to learn from one another by sharing ways to build a welcoming climate.

We must celebrate our successes in diversity strategic planning. We are recognized as a national leader in this field. Some notable successes over the last ten years include: minority enrollment has increased from 10.2% to 13.8%; the number of degrees awarded to minority students has doubled; we are 7th in the nation for black student graduation rates; the number of minority faculty has increased from 11.8% to 17.1%; the number of women faculty has increased from 29% to 36%; other universities have contacted us to express interest in our diversity strategic planning process—among them Auburn, Tulane, Rutgers, and Berkeley.

While we have experienced many successes, areas for improvement remain:

- Retention of minority faculty: Like minority students, minority faculty do not receive enough support.
- Recruitment and retention of minority staff: Demographics present an obstacle, but we are not doing well even in diverse areas of the state.
- Expanding the capacity for change: The same faculty, staff, and administrators are always involved in diversity strategic planning; we need to engage more people.
- Expanding the definition of diversity: The definition has broadened significantly, but needs to be even more inclusive. We need to move beyond the “comfort zone.”

Penn State is faced with several ongoing challenges in diversity strategic planning. Key among those is the issue of assessment. We need to start asking hard questions, while keeping in mind the “three A’s” – access, affordability, and accountability. Are we putting our resources in the right places? If programs aren’t working well, we need to have the courage to move our resources elsewhere. Opportunity costs are always involved.

The demographics of the state of Pennsylvania present another challenge. Our state is getting older; in fact, Pennsylvania is the second oldest state in the nation. We are seen as a “private university with a public mission.” Students are coming to us from increasingly segregated environments.

The student body is changing, largely because of cost. A look at the distribution of the applicant pool vs. matriculating students reveals the “hollowing out of the middle class.” This dichotomy is increasingly evident, and we shouldn’t be satisfied until the graduation gap is eliminated. *All* students should graduate at the same rate. We must continue to knock down the myth that quality and climate are dichotomous; they are mutually supportive.

In the coming years, we will see a larger focus on internationalization. Global engagement is part of diversity. We have made a great deal of progress in this area, but there is still a long way to go.

Questions

Q: How do our recycling efforts impact our diversity work?

A: The amount spent on financial aid has increased from approximately 35 million dollars to over 80 million dollars in the last seventy years. The President's Opportunity Fund has been a tremendous help in hiring faculty of color and women in key areas. People are seeking partnerships more, as is evident through the use of this fund. Perhaps we should consider a similar fund for recruiting staff of color.

Q: What can you tell us about the availability of fellowships and matching funds vis-à-vis diversity?

A: We have tried to get donors to be less restrictive about their gifts. Trustee scholarships are ideally available very broadly for maximum flexibility in order to put the resources where the greatest need is. Dr. Jones praised Ed Thompson's efforts here, noting that over \$100,000 was raised recently at the Black Alumni Reunion weekend. Dr. Jones also pointed out that we are a victim of our own success. As we recruit and retain more students of color, more financial aid is needed.

Measuring What Matters Most: Outcomes or Activities

Louise Sandmeyer, Executive Director
Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

Louise Sandmeyer explained that the strategic planning process can take many forms; however, once the planning process is complete, the next step of the process is assessing the outcome of the programming put into place. In fact, that is the main question of critics of the strategic planning process: "How do we know that what we do makes a difference?"

In the diversity context, it is important to celebrate successes. This must be tempered with an eye on "continuous quality improvement"—while it is important to recognize and celebrate what has worked, "if we stay on the same track without moving forward, we may get hit by the next train." Incorporating "continuous quality improvement" teaches us to always be looking for the next opportunity. In fact, recently in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the Spellings Commission reported that in order to move forward in the area of diversity, universities must adopt a different emphasis – actually prove that programming is making a difference.

Within Penn State, the question that is often asked is whether programming serves the core mission of the University. Areas that have been called into question by our critics include: The recycling program, Student Affairs counselors, OHR's training and development, and diversity initiatives. Critics ask, "Do these programs matter?" in an age of continuing budget cuts and the need to do more with less. But in answering these questions, it is important to realize that some benefits cannot be quantified and "counting only the countable" may not yield an accurate picture about programming and its value. In addition, those in charge may protest that programming is for the sake of learning and improvement, not for the sake of measurement. It is important to determine what we are really measuring. Proper assessment is possible only when the right questions are asked and there is an emphasis on planning for and determining meaningful and measurable outcomes.

At this point in the diversity strategic plan, the process is being expanded to look at these issues—units are being asked to pay attention to outcomes. What we see University-wide is lag time between doing and measuring—those in charge of programming think about measurement after the fact. At this point units are encouraged to become more planful—begin to plan what we want as an outcome. The planning process now encompasses more steps—goals of the program, proposed outcome, and how to measure if the outcome was realized. Designing programs depends upon building questions into the process—1) Identify goals; 2) outcome oriented questions; and 3) how could this be best measured? “If we do what is always done, we’ll get what we always got.” We need to break the “cycle of doing,” starting slowly and focusing on identifying measures—understand the target group, goals, desired outcomes, and which part or parts are quantifiable and measurable along with whether this measure is meaningful or is more simply a contributor to a bigger picture. Look at the system within you are operating—what matters most? We tend to measure who showed up; we should measure whether showing up made a difference. At that point, with limited resources in mind, it is important to evaluate what you are doing in relation to the outcomes the system or unit wants to achieve. For example, every year, the University supports a month of Martin Luther King, Jr. activities. For each programming initiative, ask yourself, what is the outcome that we are hoping for? If our goal is awareness and attention, the programming is great and very informative. If instead, we look for transformational experiences during the programming as the desired outcome, then the answer is no—the question would then become whether the programming is worth the time and money, which would be an unfortunate misdirection. It is important to identify the significant few goals and measurable outcomes, not the trivial many! What is the right question? MLK programming has been very successful; however, if the right questions are not asked, if we fail to identify measures that matter or try for an unachievable goal, we could fail to recognize the program’s success.

Louise then asked the attendees to talk to those seated at their tables for 20 to 30 minutes to share their own particular unit initiatives, identify the goal, the desired outcome, and how this could be measured. When the larger group reconvened, the discussion centered on the issue of identifying “the few” because in the past the process has focused upon increasing the number of programs offered without regard for whether or not this direction made sense for the unit. Louise pointed out that the units all want the same things, but the process of determining whether we are getting what we want from it requires openness—we have to be prepared to recognize not only successes but that a particular program was not successful and make changes and move forward. In an age of “doing more with less,” we have to process whether we are spending time and resources on something that matters.

Another question from the groups regarded buy-in and shifting the culture towards a greater value placed upon diversity. The *Framework* was identified as a change agent, requiring buy-in and accountability that resulted in asking for greater commitment from the deans and other budget executives. It required identifying diversity as a goal, something valued by the University, and the employment of survey instruments (such as faculty/staff surveys and climate surveys) to gather data as a baseline as a critical first effort towards determining where we were and whether we were moving forward.

The importance of commitment at the dean's level is demonstrated by the great strides realized within Dickinson School of Law. In 2001, there were no African/American male students enrolled. With concentrated effort and resources on implementation of recruitment and climate initiatives undertaken with the commitment of the new dean and engagement of the whole school, the picture has changed completely—it now ranks 4th or 5th within the nation for its enrollment of African Americans. Other successes identified have increased: From no self-identified LGBT students to a vibrant new LGBT-centered student organization, “OUTlaws,” increased awareness of climate issues for transitioning/transgender persons, locating a place for Muslim students to conduct their daily prayers, “Minority Law School Association,” and a critical mass of African American, Latino, and Asian Pacific Islanders. Dickinson is a great example of how leadership can move a unit from a point where they couldn't quite formulate a strategic diversity plan to talk about events and activities to a point where they can now define their goals and outcomes.

Another table of attendees presented the issue of hiring staff—it seems that there is greater difficulty recruiting diverse staff members than faculty or students. The “Minority Internship Program” is a one-year program hiring students from the University in a minority category—many students do not think of working at the University upon graduation and an internship opens up this possibility to them. At the end of the year, there is an offer of full time employment for the intern. During the past six years, the program has indeed hired bright students as employees, but retention is a problem. They enroll in graduate school or leave for other employment, always on good terms, indicating the program's success in building the career possibilities for the intern, but retention remains elusive, mainly due to lack of a competitive salary.

Louise concluded her presentation, thanking everyone for their participation and sharing what they have observed in their individual units.

Breakout Sessions

Using Data to Inform Planning and Decision Making

Michael Dooris, Director of Planning, Research and Assessment
Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

The notes for this workshop can be found directly on the Power Point presentation for the workshop, which is located at http://www.equity.psu.edu/workshop/sp08/presentations_08/dooris.pdf. The notes can be toggled on for each slide by clicking an icon on the top left-hand corner of each slide that has a note on it.

Hire Power: Strategies for Hiring Key Employee Talent

Steve Hayes, Assistant Manager for Diversity Outreach, Inclusion, and Special Programs, OHR
Julie Hartley, Human Resources Specialist, OHR

Hire Power is a program that is designed to improve recruiting and interviewing at Penn State. It is part of a University initiative endorsed by the provost to help make our hiring process more consistent, and it represents a major paradigm shift in the way in which these activities have traditionally been carried out at Penn State. With Hire Power, the predominant focus in filling a

vacancy moves from quickly filling a position to thinking strategically about finding the right person. There are three key elements of Hire Power: diversity, behavior-based questions, and use of a score card. The objectives of Hire Power training are as follows:

- Identify strategic hiring processes
- Identify critical success competencies and related behaviors
- Understand behavior-based interviewing
- Practice developing behavior-based interview questions
- Use a scoring system to document search results
- Avoid common interview mistakes

Why worry about the hiring process? Research shows that 30% of all business failures are due to poor hiring practices. Hiring mistakes can affect turnover costs, cause low employee morale, and adversely affect customer service. To avoid these pitfalls, Hire Power advocates an approach in which the following steps occur: think strategically, gain approvals, announce the position, form a search committee, prepare for the interview, conduct the interview, check references, and hire the right person.

In thinking strategically, you must alter your strategy depending on the type of position (nonexempt, entry-level exempt, senior level exempt or management). Identify jobs that are hard to fill, represent special skills to the unit, and/or have high turnover. Balance filling vacancies through internal promotions, diversity goals, and the need for external expertise. It is critical to involve your Human Resources representative in the process. Provide the representative with an updated job description, and check to make sure that the job in question is appropriately graded. Next, identify competencies and related behaviors by reviewing the job description, interviewing highly successful employees in the position (if possible), interviewing the supervisor of the position, and developing a score card for candidates. Consider the Penn State competencies: effective knowledge, accountability and self-management, teamwork and leadership, communication, innovation and problem-solving, customer service, quality, and support of diversity.

If the internal search fails, announce the job externally, being mindful to remove Penn State jargon from the announcement. Attend to diversity considerations throughout the search. The applicant pool should reflect your unit's diversity goals, and when a short list of candidates is ready, be sure to discuss the diversity of your applicants with your Human Resources representative. In your preparation for the interview, compile behavior-based questions (past behavior predicts future performance). Reference checking is vital. Statistics show that 80% of job applications contain false work history information; 30% contain false educational background information.

For the PowerPoint document accompanying this presentation, please visit [Briefing of Penn State's Hire Power: Strategies for Hiring Key Employee Talent](#).