Feedback on A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2010-15 and 2014/15 through 2018/19 Diversity Initiatives
Fall 2014
College of Education

The College of Education presented a strong strategic plan with diversity and inclusion integrated throughout. Commitment to diversity is evidenced by, but not limited to, an Office of Multicultural Programs led by an assistant dean and the standing Diversity and Community Enhancement Committee (DCEC). Together, these structures enhance the recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff and contribute to other diversity enterprises in the college. Diversity is thoughtfully woven across eight cross-cutting themes, and an update on the Framework's seven Challenges provides answers to the diversity section of the planning guidelines. The plan signals that the college’s future curricula and education along with its research will enable diverse individuals who are at risk to overcome disparities in educational attainment. The review team suggests sharing some concrete examples of approaches being considered by various departments as strategies to attain positive outcomes throughout the college. Adding clear goals, timelines, and metrics to gauge progress would foster appropriate follow through on these promising ideas.

The Summer College Opportunity Program in Education (SCOPE) program for underrepresented/underserved students in their junior year of high school is particularly laudable. Data demonstrate that 80 percent of SCOPE students enroll in higher education, with 41 percent enrolled at Penn State and 16 percent in the College of Education. This best practice has University-wide impact. The college should consider emulating the outcomes tracking component of this program and its ability to evaluate success with specific metrics among its other diversity initiatives, like the new Hazleton One Community Center. Also, the college’s reach through online education has potential that should help broaden the spectrum of diversity beyond racial/ethnic representation for groups like adult learners, veterans, and first-generation students. Finally, the impact of the symbiotic relationship between student teachers and the communities they serve should have assessment metrics for both groups. Diverse communities where its students and researchers work are opportunities that the college should leverage to build its diversity capacity.

**Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations**

**Challenge 1: Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity**
- The college’s broad and inclusive conception of diversity is noteworthy.
- The review team suggests use of metrics to assess the success of initiatives identified by the DCEC for their annual themes including LGBTQ, American Indian, disability, linguistic, and teaching and learning.
- Potential best practices: the level of engagement and activity of the DCEC and their collaborative work with the assistant dean.

**Challenge 2: Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate**
- Developing, working to sustain, and coordinating efforts with diversity/climate committees in each of the college’s four departments is commendable.
- The newly launched college website, with increased visibility for the Office of Multicultural Programs, shows promise. Data on how this new initiative impacts the college’s future population would be helpful.
- Potential best practice: collaborating with other units to sponsor the Education and Civil Rights conference.

**Representation (Access and Success)**

**Challenge 3: Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body**
- The review team finds the “peer” perspective useful for college recruitment efforts. It reflects thoughtfully on reaching out to underrepresented/underserved students by leveraging existing ties with
these students; however, responsibility for recruiting diverse students should also rest with all college constituents.

- The team also appreciates the focus on the “less visible” and sees this perspective as a possible area of growth.
- Potential best practices: LifeLink PSU, the summer 2014 co-sponsorship initiative for visually impaired high school students, Thomas Puksar Graduate Assistantships in Education, and additional funding support.
- Best practice: SCOPE. The college should consider further evaluative program measures, like how SCOPE students impact their communities (e.g., student involvement and flow of educational information).

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

- The proactive hiring strategy now being employed to facilitate a more inclusive workforce as attrition occurs is exemplary.
- The metrics provided in the plan on workforce dynamics (e.g., increasing male representation in highly female-dominated professions over time) illumine diversity hiring goals. The review team supports and encourages this practice.

**Education and Scholarship**

**Challenge 5: Developing a Curriculum That Fosters U.S. and International Cultural Competencies**

- The numerous curricular innovations over the past several years are excellent.
- The symbiotic relationship between teachers and diverse communities they work in should be further explored. Gathering data that demonstrates impact on educational reciprocity (i.e., the Ecuador English as a Second Language Project) deepens the level of diversity commitment and understanding.
- The plan cites increased mandated state standards as a challenge for attracting students for K-12 teacher positions. Since these gatekeeper mechanisms adversely impact the recruitment of students of color, the college should identify ways the curriculum could address the need for higher grade point averages.
- No mention was made on how the current curriculum impacts STEM fields.
- Potential best practices: the Philadelphia Urban Seminar, the Ecuador ESL Program, the Sheppard School Partnership, the Student Teaching Abroad Program, the Hazleton Initiative, and the Commitment to Conducting a College-wide Inventory of Courses with Significant Diversity Content. A matrix for each could help to determine progress.

**Institutional Viability and Vitality**

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

- Increased diverse representation on committees and governing boards that enhance diversity within and beyond Penn State is outstanding.
- Evaluating how the new Leadership Under Fire professional development activity impacts the leadership profile in the years to come offers yet another hopeful tracking mechanism.

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

- Potential best practices: the DCEC changed its organizational structure to capture the collective interests of students, faculty, and staff, which led to higher visibility and activity and increased committee membership; the creation of a Student Recruitment Task force; and the refined model for student recruitment, retention, and curricular development.
- Best practice: the Office of Multicultural Programs led by an assistant dean who actively participates in all areas of the college’s shared governance.