

Plan — Research — Assess!

Welcome

Welcome to the first fall 2009 issue of **Plan — Research — Assess!** This newsletter is published by the Planning, Research, and Assessment Office (PRA) at Penn State Berks.

The purpose of the PRA newsletter is to disseminate information on current assessment, institutional research, and planning projects at the College.

The PRA office is grateful for the student workers who make the PRA newsletter possible.

FYI: Go directly to articles by clicking on article titles listed below *Inside This Issue*.

Comments on the newsletter? Email: PRA.Office.

We're also on Facebook & Twitter. Click on the icons to connect.



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Inside This Issue

Strategic Planning for Year Two is Underway.....	1
Campus & University Reports on the PRA Web.....	1
Data Warehouse Requests.....	1
First Year Experience (FYE) Assessment.....	2
University Recognizes Berks Diversity Plan	2
Student Orientation Survey Results....	2
PRA to be on FaceBook.....	2

Strategic Planning for Year Two is Underway

Introduction

Building on 50 Years of Excellence, Penn State Berks 2008-2013 strategic plan is now in its second year. The Strategic Planning Council (SPC) has met to discuss how the College can support its implementation.

The SPC is taking a different track this year. Each of the four SPC meetings will be prefaced with a presentation from a campus area that is pertinent to the *Year Two Action Steps*. At the first meeting, held in the Ivy Residence Hall, both Housing & Food Services and Residence Life talked about programming, facilities, and issues confronting students who live in the Residence Halls. Dan Brown, Assistant Director Residence Life, welcomed the opportunity to talk to the SPC. "It's helpful to the Residence Hall operations" states Dan Brown.

Strategic Plan Advocates

As with Year One, an SPC **advocate** is assigned to each of the Year Two Action Steps. The responsibilities of the advocate is three-fold. First, advocates must garner the

necessary resources needed to implement the action step. Second, the advocate is instrumental to providing information on the status of the action step. Third, the advocate is responsible for revising the action step if deemed appropriate.

Strategic Plan Priorities

Arguably, a strategic plan is a set of priorities that organizations adhere. However, because of the current economic downturn, the SPC identified **nine** priorities for this year's implementation of the Strategic Plan. In essence, these are priorities of Berks priorities!

- **Retain Students** by maintaining high level of faculty contact and increasing co-curricular opportunities
- Support activities that maximize **Student Engagement**
- **Recruit Students**
- Identify and offer a cadre of **Viable Programs**
- Continue with **Continuous Improvement** efforts

- Establish Berks as a **regional leader in community outreach**
- Market Berks' **Competitive Advantage**
- Seek alternative **Sources of Funding**
- Improve **Financial Aid** opportunities

Strategic Plan Assumptions

The SPC re-examined the planning assumptions articulated during the development of the 2008-13 Strategic Plan in Summer 2007. Not surprisingly, some of the assumptions were modified especially those regarding revenue sources. A particular emphasis on e-learning was added to the list of **institutional, financial, physical plant, enrollment, and relationship to the communities** parameters outlined in Summer 2007. A new parameter, **Market Considerations**, was also added to the current list of assumptions. The SPC agreed that the region's rapidly growing Hispanic community as well as adult students returning to college should be the focus of some of the current marketing efforts.

Campus & University Reports on the PRA Web

Several reports and the Penn State Berks fact books that have been compiled by PRA or the University and are available on the *PRA Reports* web page. These reports, listed below, provide information that can be used for planning, new program development, assessment, and benchmarking. Each report is also a hyperlink. To access the PRA Reports page, click: <http://bk.psu.edu/information/30464.htm?cn711>.

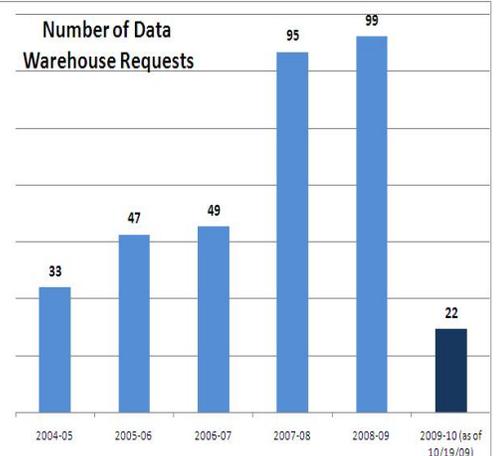
Penn State Berks Reports

- [2008-2009 Penn State Berks Fact Book](#)
- [2007-2008 Penn State Berks Fact Book](#)
- [Berks County & Surrounding Environmental Scan](#)
- [2008-2009 Recent Graduate Study](#) (Results, exec. summary)
- [2007-2008 Recent Graduate Study](#) (Results, exec. summary)
- [2007 Market Research Survey](#)
- [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\) Peer/ Benchmarking Comparisons](#)
- [HECBC & Other Economic Impact Studies](#)

University Park Reports

- [University Budget Office Fact Book](#)
- [University Budget Common Data Set](#)
- [Planning & Institutional Assessment Strategic Indicators](#)

Data Warehouse Requests



First Year Experience (FYE) Assessment

Introduction

In fall 2008, the University required every campus to submit a First Year Experience (FYE) plan. The purpose was to ensure that every incoming student at PSU had opportunity to engage in academic study, forge faculty and staff relationships, and be familiar with the vastness that is Penn State. An assessment of the FYE was required with the plan.

FYE Assessment

The FYE Assessment has four components. FTCAP Experience Survey, Student Orientation Survey, Assessment of the FYS (PSU 005) experience, and Compilation of Student Success Indicators including:

First Semester

- GPA
- Credits Enrolled
- Credits Earned

First Year

- GPA
- Credits Enrolled



In addition, one year retention rates will be compiled.

Strengths Based Approach

Dr. Laurie Schreiner, a leading national lecturer and research fellow at the Noel Academy for Strength-Based Leadership, approached PRA after her visit to Berks in May 2009. Impressed with the faculty and staff dedication to student success, she asked PRA to partner in a research project pertaining to the Strengths Based approach. The Strengths Based approach hones in a students innate strengths. By identifying five of a students array of strengths, students learn how to apply them to challenging as well as every day situations.

The Strengths Based approach is not new to Berks. The Academic Advising Office has begun using the Strengths Based approach in several advising situations. Career Services has used this approach to help students steer toward an appropriate career.

First Year Seminar Surveys

Approximately, instructors of 16 PSU 005 sections were asked to administer a PRE and POST survey to the First Year Seminar students. Computed will be the difference between the PRE and POST survey responses on several items that discern student motivation, ability to establish relationships, time management, and locus of control.

Half of the 16 participating First Year Seminars will use the Strengths Based approach in at least four classes. Difference in POST survey results between these sections and the other FYS sections will be determined. If the differences are both statistically and practically significant, application of the Strengths Based approach in other areas will be considered. This includes use in other first year courses, "gateway" courses, and other campus areas.

Information about the FYE Assessment, can be found at: <http://www.apu.edu/strengthsacademy/> or contact the [PRA Office](#).

University Recognizes Berks Diversity Plan

Diversity Framework

The 2004-2009 *Diversity Framework* will expire soon. Accordingly, the University has asked all campuses to submit their 2010-2015 Diversity Framework to the Office of Social Equity by December 1, 2009.

Model Plan

Where and when the plan must be submitted is essentially all that Berks has in common with the other campus Diversity Framework plans. Berks will be the only campus to submit the Diversity Framework as part of the existing campus 2008-2013 strategic plan, *Building on 50 Years of Excellence*. In other words, the Diversity Framework will be integrated into the 2008-2013 campus strategic plan and not as a separate document.

Diversity Challenges

To achieve diversity potential, the University has created **seven** challenges for each academic unit to aspire. The challenges are listed below.

1. Developing a Shared and Inclusive Understanding of Diversity
2. Creating a Welcoming Campus Climate
3. Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Student Body Challenge
4. Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce
5. Developing a Curriculum That Fosters U.S. and International Cultural Competencies
6. Diversifying University Leadership and Management, and
7. Coordinating Organizational Change.

Diversity Planning Committee

The 2010-2015 *Diversity Framework* would not be possible without the talents and efforts of the Diversity Planning Committee. Hailing from several campus areas, the following are also members of the Diversity Committee:

- Dan Brown, Residence Life
- Pete Coleman, Campus Life
- Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro, PRA
- Dr. Sudip Ghosh, EBC
- Karen Kihurani, Multicultural Office
- Stefanie Kerns, PRA
- Dr. Thomas Lynn, HASS
- Dr. Cesar Martinez-Garza, Science
- Sandra Reichel, Student Services
- Dr. Blaine Steensland, Student Services.



Student Orientation Survey Results

Background

Students who attended the 2009 New Student Orientation were asked to complete an online survey about their orientation experiences. Students were asked, as a result of the orientation, how well they felt connected to the campus, if they had adequate knowledge about academic support at Berks, learned about the different campus offices, and perceived Berks as welcoming to students of diverse backgrounds.

Twice as many new students responded to this year's survey compared to 2008. Almost half (45.5%) of students who attended the 2009 New Student Orientation completed the survey.

Results

- Eighty-three percent (83.0%) of the respondents stated that the Orientation helped them feel connected to Berks
- Almost all the respondents (94.0%) who attended orientation indicated that the campus is a school that welcomes and celebrates diversity
- Events that were cited as helping students feel connected included: the Residential and Commuter Orientation Rallies (85%), "We are...Penn State Berks" (80%), FYS Breakout groups (77%), Metamorphosis, and Making the Most of College (67%).

I learned about the different offices and staff that provide academic support during orientation.



PRA to be on Face Book



PRA anticipates a fully functional Facebook fan page by November 2009. Parallel to the campus Facebook fan page created to keep students, staff, and faculty connected, the PRA Office is continually looking at innovative ways to increase survey response rates and student participation in student

assessment activities. "One of our main challenges is to get alumni that have been away from the campus for more than one year to complete our campus surveys," observes Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro. She also notes that so many of the PSU alumni are using social networking capabilities so it should be beneficial to have PRA on Facebook. PRA has

consulted on the design and content of the PRA fan page from Rachel Morrow, a first year Communication Arts & Sciences major. As with many of the Berks students, Rachel has much experience with Facebook. Rachel sees "the potential of social networking. There is so much available." PRA will evaluate the Facebook fan page site to see if the site is, in fact, working.