

**A Framework to
Foster Diversity
At Penn State**

2004-09

The Berks Lehigh Valley College is in the process of implementing its third Diversity Strategic Plan. Each plan involved all units of the college working together in establishing goals and objectives and then initiating the actions to address each of the goals and objectives. The Dean of the College provided leadership in directing the efforts with input from the college community through the administration and the Diversity Committee. During the last eight years, two campus climate surveys were undertaken to provide critical information regarding student, faculty and staff understandings and practices related to diversity. The survey results assisted in developing recommendations and action steps that enhanced the college's various diversity initiatives.

The college has made great strides in making its community a welcoming environment that is understanding and respectful of the different cultures and ways of today's society. Minority student enrollments have shown a steady increase for the past several years. The student-run Rainbow Alliance, a GLBT group, has introduced many initiatives and activities of awareness to the community. Academic Affairs has created two staff positions, a disability specialist and ESL specialist to serve an underrepresented population of the college. Continuing Education provides several initiatives on campus and in the Berks and Lehigh Valley community for both youth and adults for minority group populations. These initiatives are in addition to the numerous programs highlighted in the final report of "A Framework for Fostering Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003" for Berks Lehigh Valley.

Vision Statement on Diversity

The vision is for a Berks-Lehigh Valley College in which each faculty, staff and student community member has been introduced to the people and traditions of a culture other than their own. The culture could be in this country, surrounding communities adjacent to the College, and/or in some other part of the world. The introduction to another culture and the ability to compare with one's own stimulates analytical thinking and learning at both a cognitive and affective level. The "experience" of another culture is a critically important dimension of education for global citizenship in the 21st century. Understanding and respecting the diverse characteristics of human beings allows us to add a new dimension to learning.

The operational definition of diversity, agreed upon and utilized throughout the Diversity Strategic Plan, is based on the Penn State non-discrimination statement and focuses on the multitudinal components listed below.

- Adult/Returning students
- Veterans
- Learning impairment
- Sensory impairment
- Physically challenged
- Religious practices
- Family structures (single parent, adoptive parent)
- Urban vs. Rural vs. Suburban
- Handicapped disabled
- International students
- English as a second language
- Socio-economic background
- Race
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Citizenship
- Ethnicity

- geographic location
- Age
- Composition of college faculty and staff

Penn State Policy AD42 Statement on Nondiscrimination and Harassment

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University.

Berks-Lehigh Valley College strives to:

- Recognize individual differences and contributions of every member of the college community.
- Commit ourselves to establishing a just community where the dignity of the college community members is affirmed and valued.
- Commit ourselves to enhancing the diversity of the College.
- Commit ourselves to valuing and serving a diverse population in our communities, the nation and the world.

Goals/Objectives

The college has identified a number of specific goals and objectives for the planning period. The following goals are identified for the Diversity Committee and for the four key areas of the 2004-09 Diversity Plan. These goals build upon currently offered programs and initiatives that were reflected in the final report for 1998-2003 planning period.

I. Diversity Committee

- Develop internal and external partnerships with other colleges, businesses and community agencies to improve our diversity initiatives.
- Design and implement a comprehensive system of responsibility and accountability for increasing diversity and improving the campus climate.
- Design ways to find resources to enable the college to adequately fund diversity initiatives.

II. Key Areas of the Diversity Plan

A. Campus Climate and Inter-group Relations

- Enhance the Multi-Cultural/International Student Counselor position to be viewed as the College leadership position on diversity issues and needs.
- Encourage and support in whatever way possible the creation of a functioning Diversity Committee for the Lehigh Valley Campus.
- Assist in creating a regular process by which students, faculty and staff are engaged in discussions related to diversity and the College such as a Diversity Forum Series.
- Define how we monitor and measure success of diversity initiatives within the Student Affairs Division.
- Enhance the number of underrepresented staff working within the division.
- Disseminate and encourage discussion of the Diversity Committee's Report on the 2002 Diversity Climate Survey, which has already been shared with key constituencies: The Dean and her Administrative Council, the Student Government Associations on both campuses, and the College Senate.
- Develop a plan for responding to the 2002 Diversity Climate Survey, which indicated that understandings of diversity vary widely among students.
- The College's Diversity Committee will develop a "Diversity Statement" that faculty will be encouraged to include in their syllabi.
- Ensure that consistent definitions of diversity are communicated to students in the courses designated "Intercultural and International Competence."
- Each academic division will be charged with developing a Diversity Committee, modeled on the one established in the Division of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS).
- Each academic division will be charged with establishing a diversity link on its home page.
- Faculty search committees will be encouraged to include diversity as a criterion in search processes.
- Funding will be sought to endow an annual student writing competition on diversity and multiculturalism.
- Following a model established by HASS (an academic division of the college), each academic division will be urged to determine whether minority students feel welcomed in their classes and to develop an action plan in response to those findings.
- Encourage and support faculty sponsorship of academic conferences focusing on diversity.

B. Representation (Access and Success)

- Establish specific retention goals for underrepresented student groups in consultation with the Retention Council.
- Increase the number and percentage of underrepresented students enrolled in the college from the base 2003-2004 academic year.
- Establish an admissions position specifically related to outreach efforts in support of diversity by 2005.
- Develop a college publication and web pages that specifically address current and potential student interest in diversity needs, issues and opportunities.

- Define an early outreach admissions effort, in collaboration with MACA, PEPP and CE, to identify and work with underrepresented potential students in grades 8-11 to enhance college awareness, preparedness and progression to college.
- To acquire the names of all potential underrepresented students within the service area in collaboration with MACA for inclusion within our prospect pool and subsequent contact.
- Enhance collaboration between the multi-cultural coordinators and initiatives of the area colleges and universities, community resources and for profit businesses to expand opportunities for student involvement, programming and connections to community resources.
- Seek external funding sources to support outreach initiatives and programming opportunities for currently enrolled students.
- Refine the academic tracking system for underrepresented students.
- Identify increased opportunities (leadership, resident assistants, staffing) for underrepresented students.
- Encourage the development of additional student organizations that support Hispanic students and those of Middle Eastern descent.
- Ensure diversity programming and training is a part of staff training and development with the Student Affairs Division.
- Actively pursue international student and faculty exchanges with universities abroad, aiming at 50 students a year by 2009. External funding opportunities to support these exchanges will also be explored.
- Intensify the commitment to the recruitment of a diverse faculty, including senior appointments if possible.
- Appoint a mentor for minority faculty who complements the support of individual faculty mentors.
- Ensure that international and multicultural research is encouraged, supported, recognized, and rewarded.
- Scholarship focusing on diversity will be explicitly encouraged in the College's Promotion and Tenure Policy.
- The college has initiated proposals to the United States Department of State to offer international teacher exchange programs that will enhance opportunities for faculty and students to participate in multi-cultural experiences.
- Continue the development of the partnership between the University of Turabo in Puerto Rico with the Masters Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language and the support this option offers to the school districts and students of public education in eastern Pennsylvania.
- Implement the Youth Challenge Grant that supports year round education programs for low-income families and youth that provide academic enrichment and career awareness within the Allentown School District.

C. Education and Scholarship

- Assist academic colleagues with educational programming related to diversity and offer such programming to FYS and other general education classes.
- Examine the potential for BKLV scholarships that would consider diversity as one of a number of criteria.
- Organize a teaching colloquium to showcase examples of "Teaching Diversity" across the disciplines.
- Organize a faculty retreat focusing on strategies for "Promoting Diversity."
- Include "Diversity and Community-Building" as a required component in all first-year seminars.
- Promote and support service learning opportunities for students to apply academic lessons in multicultural settings.
- Provide resources and opportunities for faculty to pursue scholarship on diversity.
- Diversity initiatives in teaching and scholarship will be explicitly encouraged and valued in tenure and promotion decisions.

D. Institutional Viability and Vitality

- Ensure that all search committees within the College are to the extent possible, representative of the diversity found within the College.
- Encourage and support staff members interested in participating in diversity related workshops, conferences and programming.
- Encourage and support the participation of minority faculty and staff in leadership development programs.
- Encourage faculty and staff from underrepresented groups to apply for administrative internships.
- Academic administrators will regularly include issues of diversity on the agenda of its weekly meetings.
- Schedule additional diversity/awareness training.
- Encourage that diversity be a criterion in search processes.
- Emphasize diversity-related activities and professional development in employee performance evaluations.
- The Administrative Council will regularly review progress on diversity initiatives throughout the College.