

April 1, 2013

**THE FORUM ON BLACK AFFAIRS**

**WORKING PAPER:  
2013 STATUS OF BLACK FACULTY AND STAFF AT  
THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Submitted to: Leslie Laing, FOBA President

By The Special Committee on  
Status of Black Faculty and Staff at Penn State

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Overview:** FOBA has written major reports in 1981, 1999, and 2000 on the status of Black People at Penn State. This 2013 report is a continuation of FOBA's efforts to support the University in making this institution a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all. We highlight four challenges that Black faculty, staff, and administrators at Penn State face, and we provide recommendations to meet these challenges in maintaining and establishing even more proactive strategies toward diversifying the University across all of these positions.

**Challenge 1: Overcoming Stagnation:** The data indicate that the growth of Black faculty at Penn State has been less than 1 percent in over 30 years in relation to the growth in the total number of faculty. The number of staff in relation to the total number of staff for each staff category has ranged from 1.3 to 4.4 percent over the past 10 years. The representation of faculty (3%) and staff (5.9%) at the Commonwealth campuses are worse than at University Park, as these individuals are located at 19 different locations.

**Challenge 2: Increasing Representation of Blacks in Senior Leadership Roles:** Currently, there are only 3 Black senior administrators at University Park and 2 Black chancellors at the Commonwealth campuses. Without a constant increase and retention of Black faculty and staff at Penn State, there is no clear mechanism for career advancement, and for promoting faculty and staff to senior-administrative positions.

**Challenge 3: Reporting and Implications:** More transparency is needed in reporting data regarding promotion and tenure of Black faculty as well as reporting the promotion of Black staff. Both sets of information need to take into account gender.

**Challenge 4: Changing the Reality of the Black Experience Penn State:** The views of Black faculty and staff were mixed and layered. Positive experiences were based on the support of non-Black faculty or outside sources. Numerous faculty and staff indicated experiences of racial/ethnic bias, which were obstacles to career advancement opportunities. The most consistent challenge was a feeling of isolation, due to the small number of Black faculty and staff, and the constant need to re-educate non-ethnically diverse groups about racial issues.

### Recommendations

- 1. Increase Efforts to Diversify University Administration and Other Positions:** Central administration needs to be the model for the rest of the University by reflecting what diversity can and should be at the University. There needs to be an increased institutional commitment to equity in recruitment, hiring, retention, and career advancement, especially at the Commonwealth campuses, where there is an underrepresentation of diverse faculty and staff in relation to the number of diverse students on the campuses.
- 2. Strengthen and Require Regular Diversity Training and Accountability:** FOBA recommends that the University revise its diversity policies at Penn State or create additional ones. Diversity training should be routinely required of all University employees, including graduate assistants.
- 3. Increase Oversight and Accountability of the Diversity Strategic Plan:** FOBA recommends that the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity be provided with additional authority to hold units accountable for weak diversity plans and poor implementation and follow through.

4. **Increase Accountability for the Retention of Black Faculty and Staff:** FOBA recommends sharing the oversight between the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity. We strongly recommend revisiting the scope and role of the current Senior Faculty Mentor, which was established as a part-time position. We believe a Staff Mentorship Program for Blacks and other underrepresented groups would be helpful in creating a pipeline for diverse staff to successfully move into administrative positions.
5. **Expand the Vision of Scholarship:** Efforts need to be increased to educate program coordinators, department heads, members of promotion and tenure committees, and other evaluators about expanding their vision of teaching, research, and scholarship to include issues of diversity.

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2013 REPORT ON THE STATUS OF BLACK FACULTY AND STAFF  
AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Introduction**

The Forum on Black Affairs (FOBA)<sup>1</sup> has monitored and made concrete suggestions regarding the recruitment, development, and retention of Black<sup>2</sup> faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students for more than thirty years. Moreover, FOBA has written major reports in 1981, 1999, and 2000 on the status of Black People at Penn State. This 2013 report is a continuation of FOBA's efforts to support the University in making this institution a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all. With the aforementioned objective in mind, this working paper highlights four challenges that Penn State faces and provides recommendations to meet these challenges in maintaining and establishing even more proactive strategies toward diversifying the administration, faculty, and staff at Penn State.

Through the four challenges, we will present what has transpired regarding efforts to diversify administration, faculty, and staff since the first report in 1981, and we will provide perspectives from currently employed Black faculty, staff, and administrators, who shared their views and experiences during monthly FOBA meetings and two town hall gatherings at University Park campus. This report will also offer a list of recommendations that, if implemented, FOBA believes will (a) improve the campus climate, (b) successfully diversify the University, and (c) strengthen the economic growth and stability of the University while enhancing its scholarly reputation.

**Challenge 1: Overcoming Stagnation**

In the last three decades, the overall numbers of full-time Black employees at Penn State show only a slight increase. In 1981, FOBA presented to President John W. Oswald our report titled "*Bucking the Trend*" – *Toward the Development of a Program to Stabilize and Expand the number of Black Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students at the Pennsylvania State University*. The report acknowledged the increase in the number of Black full-time employees at Penn State between 1975 and 1980. Black full-time employees increased by 58.1 percent, even though Blacks constituted only 2 percent of the full-time employees in 1980 in comparison to 1.4 percent in 1975. While this increase over a 5-year span was impressive and provided optimism about the future of diversity at Penn State, the numbers for Black faculty and staff have not continued to be this impressive.

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<sup>1</sup> Periodically, the term "we" will be used to denote FOBA, not the views of the authors of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> In keeping with the name of our organization and to ensure inclusiveness, the term Black will be used throughout the report and will refer to individuals of African descent.

Table 1 chronicles the number and percentage of Black faculty from 1988 to 2012. In the 24-year span, Black faculty members have almost tripled. However, these numbers are not impressive when examined against the growth of the number of total faculty at Penn State, which includes the Commonwealth Campuses, Dickinson School of Law, and Hershey College of Medicine.

**Table 1: Number and Percentage of Black Faculty in Relation to Total Faculty (1988-2012)**

	1988	1993	1998	2003*	2008	2012
	N	N	N	N	N	N
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Black Faculty	60 1.8	74 2.0	99 2.5	152 3.0	165 3.0	169 3.0
Total Faculty	3,333	3,700	3,960	5,045	5,473	5,762

*Note.* The number of total faculty for 1988, 1993, and 1998 were not immediately available and thus are estimated values based on the number and percentage of Black faculty.

\*Dickinson Law School joined Penn State in 2000.

The state of Black faculty at Penn State appears to be reflective of a nation wide trend. In commenting about Black faculty in California’s higher education, Marquez (2010) noted that there has been no substantial change in Blacks’ presence in higher education. We are in agreement with this assessment. Affirmative action policies that were previously successful in improving representation of Blacks and other disadvantaged students are now either dismantled or greatly restricted. This process has been set in motion by several decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, with another major ruling on Affirmative Action in higher education expected during spring 2013 (*Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*).

We also agree with Marquez’s (2010) assessment that the lack of Black faculty will have an effect on the educational opportunities of Black students and other underrepresented students. In turn, the failure to provide equitable educational opportunities for these students will have long-term disastrous consequences for economic competitiveness. Research has shown that bringing together workers with different qualifications, backgrounds, and experiences improves problem-solving and spurs innovation and creativity (Forbes Insight, 2011). Increasing diversity in faculty will lead to increasing great opportunity for the United States to become more competitive in the global economy by capitalizing on the unique talents and contributions that diverse communities bring to the table.

Equally important is the presence of Blacks in non-faculty positions. In regard to Black staff at Penn State, which includes non-faculty professionals, clerical, technical, skilled crafts workers, and maintenance/service personnel, the numbers are equally stagnant. Table 2 shows the number

and percentage of Black staff based on the available data from 2003-2012 in 2-year increments. The largest percentage of Black staff at Penn State was in 2003, where 4 percent were professional (non-faculty), 3.9 percent were technical, and 4.4 percent were in maintenance/service. However, 2003 was the lowest percentage of Blacks in clerical positions (1.5%). The largest growth in these positions have been in 2012 (2.1%), an increase of 0.6% in an 8-year span. In contrast, 2012 has been the year with a reduction of staff as a whole at Penn State. In turn, this downturn is reflected in the reduction of Black staff employed at Penn State.

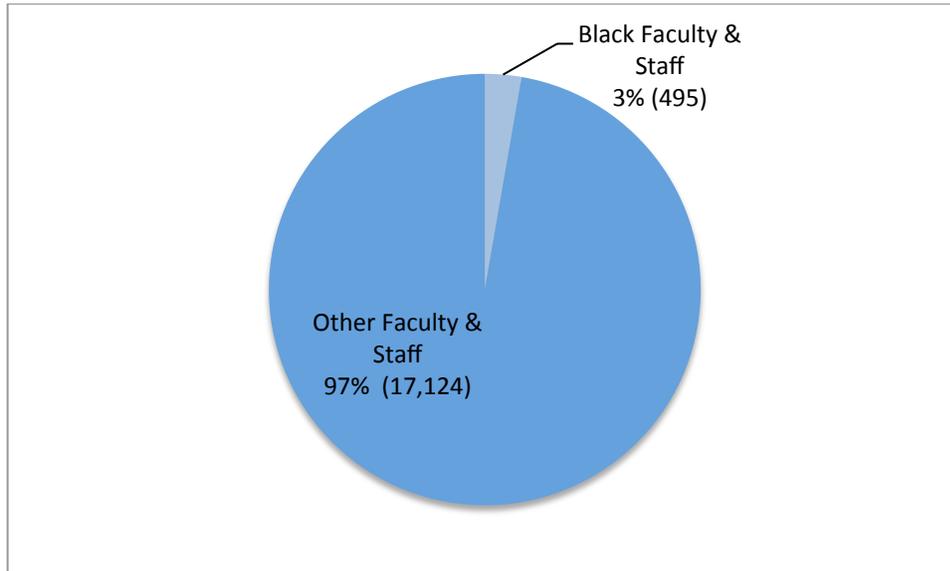
**Table 2: Number and Percentage of Black Staff at Penn State from 2003-2012**

	2003		2005		2007		2009		2012	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional (non-faculty)	163	4.0	152	3.5	151	3.2	164	3.2	135	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,074</b>		<b>4,295</b>		<b>4,783</b>		<b>5,145</b>		<b>4,390</b>	
Clerical	36	1.5	38	1.7	42	1.9	42	1.9	53	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,353</b>		<b>2,250</b>		<b>2,169</b>		<b>2,234</b>		<b>2,554</b>	
Technical	41	3.9	27	3.0	26	3.0	28	2.9	14	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,039</b>		<b>897</b>		<b>913</b>		<b>954</b>		<b>843</b>	
Skilled Crafts	8	1.3	8	1.2	7	1.0	8	1.1	10	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>		<b>656</b>		<b>698</b>		<b>708</b>		<b>757</b>	
Service	82	4.4	81	4.3	74	4.0	75	3.9	60	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,851</b>		<b>1,878</b>		<b>1,870</b>		<b>1,918</b>		<b>1,793</b>	
<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>15,867</b>		<b>16,190</b>		<b>16,807</b>		<b>17,693</b>		<b>17,541</b>	

*Note.* Data obtained from Penn State’s Affirmative Action Office include the Dickinson School of Law and the College of Medicine, but not the PA College of Technology or the Hershey Medical Center. Each total under a category represents the total number of Black employees for that category.

Sadly, thirty-two years later, the fall 2012 data indicate that there are 495 Black people employed at Penn State. This number represents only 2.8 percent of 17,619 of all faculty and staff employed at all locations, excluding PA College of Technology, throughout the Penn State System (see Figure 1 below). Thus since 1980, 30 plus years later, the growth of Black full-time employees at Penn State is less than 1 percent (0.8). Surely this negligible increase is not reflective of the University’s commitment to diversity and inclusion; however, this finding does underscore the fact that the institution needs to make significant improvement in diversity hiring.

**Figure 1: Total Number of Black Faculty and Staff at Penn State in Fall 2012**



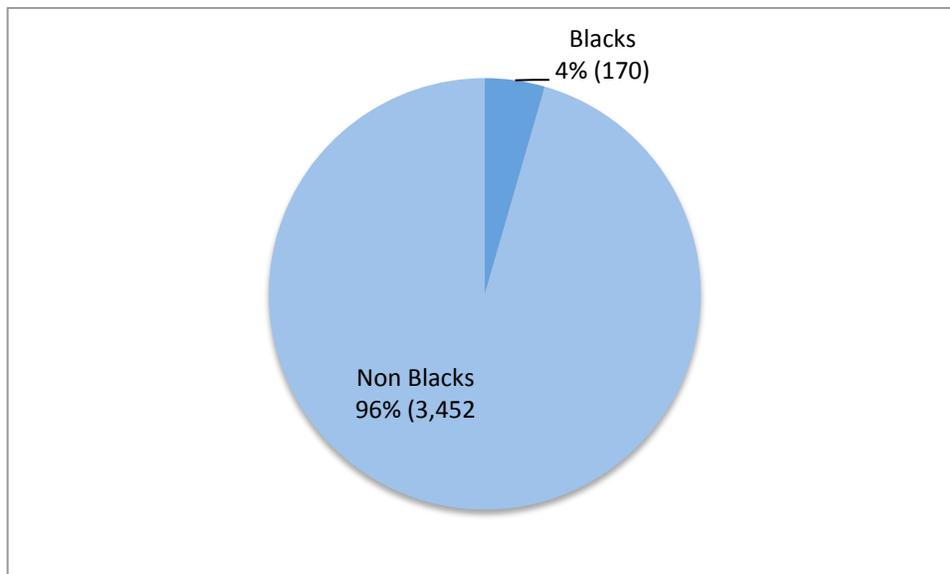
*Note.* Data obtained from Penn State’s online Fact Book. To be consistent with prior data reported, total number of faculty and staff (17,619) excludes the PA College of Technology and the Hershey Medical Center, but includes the Dickinson School of Law and the College of Medicine.<sup>3</sup>

In examining the number of Black employees at the Commonwealth campuses, excluding Great Valley, the figures, on the surface, look better than the figures at University Park. Out of 3,622 workers, approximately 4 percent of the employees are Black. See Figure 2 below. Disaggregating the data by staff and faculty indicates that 5.9 percent (123/2,077) of the staff employees are Blacks, whereas the Black faculty at the campuses is 3 percent (47/1,545), which is similar to the number of Black faculty at University Park. However, the number of Black faculty and staff at the Commonwealth Campuses is extremely disconcerting given the fact that the 4 percent represents the distribution across 19 locations. For example, 26 of the 47 Black faculty members are located on only 3 campuses (Harrisburg, Greater Allegheny, and Abington). Furthermore, 5 of the 19 campuses have zero (0) Black faculty and another 5 have only 1 Black faculty. The numbers are particularly disconcerting given that on several of the campuses, there are a significant number of Black students. For example, in Fall 2012, almost 30% of the students at Schuylkill were Black (242/867). These findings clearly underscore our concern noted on page 3: The absence of a critical mass of Black faculty and staff on any of the Commonwealth Campuses will have an adverse impact on the educational opportunities of Black students.

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<sup>3</sup> At this time, it is unknown why the total number of Penn State employees obtained from the Affirmative Action Office is different from the numbers provided online at Penn State’s Fact Book, when PA College of Technology is excluded from the analyses.

**Figure 2: Total Number of Black Faculty and Staff at Penn State's Commonwealth Campuses in Fall 2012**



Note. Data obtained from Penn State's online Fact Book. Total number of faculty is 3,662, excluding PA College of Technology.

An even more alarming concern is that it has been informally reported, but not officially confirmed, that a significant number of Blacks (staff, faculty, and administrators) will have left Penn State at the end of the 2012-13 academic year. These departures may be for various reasons, including retirement, new employment opportunities, non-renewal of contracts, and failure to receive tenure. A loss of this magnitude would be detrimental to the Black community and to the institution in general, particularly when we consider the fact that the University has a documented low hiring rate of Blacks in the past decade. If this statistic is true, then this should be a sufficient factor for the University Administration to investigate current practices and implement new ones regarding the recruitment and retention of Black faculty, staff, and administrators at Penn State.

### **Challenge 2: Increasing the Representation of Blacks in Senior Leadership Roles**

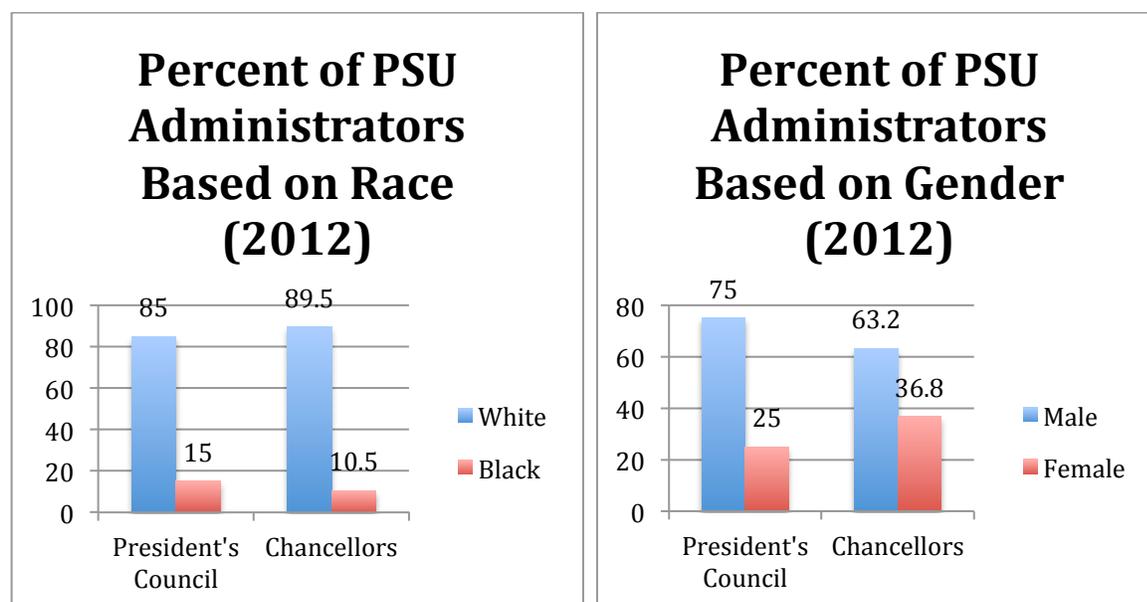
In 1980, there were 9 Blacks at Penn State classified as administrators and managerial employees, an increase in almost 5 times the original number in 2007 ( $N = 42$ ), and 6 times the original number in 2012 ( $N = 56$ ). While these numbers indicate that Blacks have made progress in leadership roles at Penn State, many of these positions are not central or clearly visible.

Furthermore, close examination of the data reveals that there is an absence of Black administrators in key positions. In fact, there are no Black deans of the colleges at University Park and there are only two Black Chancellors in the Commonwealth Education System, one at the Fayette campus, and the other at the Greater Allegheny campus. The last Black University Park dean was Rodney Reed, who served from 1990-1997. Currently, there is only 1 Black female in a senior level position at the University (the chancellor at Fayette), and 3 visible positions are held by Black males: Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Vice Provost for

Educational Equity and the Vice Provost for Global Programs are the highest executive positions held by Blacks at Penn State. The last Black female central administrator was Grace Hampton, who served as vice provost from 1988-1995.

Below, Figure 2 provides a breakdown of Penn State’s administration by race and gender. The University’s current website lists 19 individuals<sup>4</sup> under “Our Administration,” as the “President’s Council” and 19 chancellors for the Commonwealth campuses, excluding Great Valley, per the presentation of the information in Penn State’s Fact Book. The patterns are slightly different for the President’s Council and the Commonwealth chancellors. Approximately 85-90% of the administrators are White and about 11-15% are Black, and 37% of the chancellors are women, but approximately 25% are on the President’s Council.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Penn State Administrators By Race and Gender**



These statistics are representative of the 2010 U.S. Census for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and for the United States based on the prevalence of Whites (PA = 83.8%; U.S. = 78.1%), but are way below average for all racial/ethnic minorities or underrepresented groups (PA = 20.5%; U.S. = 38.5%), and for women (PA = 51.2%; U.S. = 50.8%).

While the representation of Blacks is higher at the administrative level at Penn State than in other classifications (faculty and staff), efforts are still needed to maintain and increase the representation of racial/ethnic minorities at this administrative level. Increasing the diversity of central administrators might likely have a positive effect on increasing Black faculty and staff as well as retaining them at Penn State.

<sup>4</sup> The Vice Provost for Global Programs is not part of the President’s Council, however, because of his importance as a senior administrator, he is included in the statistics. As a result, the calculations were based on 20 individuals for race and gender, not 19.

In 1981, FOBA cited Florence Ladd from an article published in the Chronicle of Higher Education titled, *Getting Minority –Group Members in Top College Jobs*. Ladd (1981) noted, “When predominantly [W]hite institutions conduct searches for senior-level administrators, minority-group candidates often emerge, are interviewed, and then, with few exceptions, are quietly ignored or cordially rejected.” FOBA maintains that this statement may still be applicable today, when we consider the trends in Black faculty and staff representation at Penn State.

To date, there appears to have been less than a dozen Blacks who have been appointed to central administrative positions at University Park and chancellor at one of the Commonwealth Campuses: Francis Achampong, Michael Adewumi, William Asbury, Blannie Bowen, Grace Hampton, Beverly Lindsey, Curtiss Porter, Rodney Reed, and James Stewart.<sup>5</sup> While there are several university programs, such as the Administrative Fellows Program and the Mentoring Program sponsored by the Commission for Women, to date, these programs have not led to the appointment of Blacks in key administrative positions at Penn State. More effort should be made to include Blacks in both programs, along with increased efforts to place Blacks that complete the program into administrative positions within the University. Given the low number of Black faculty and staff, the University reduces its opportunity to achieve greater diversity in its future leadership cohorts. So naturally, increasing faculty and staff diversity enhances the opportunities for future career advancement and the diversity of leadership at Penn State.

### **Challenge 3: Reporting and Implications**

On March 12, 2013, the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs presented the annual report on Faculty Tenure Flow Rates for 2012-13. This report has been compiled for the past 16 years. Tenure rate is provided separately by gender and minority status, but not conjointly. Faculty Affairs reports, “tenure rates for minority faculty have been lower than for non-minority faculty (54 percent and 59 percent).”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, “tenure rates for females have been lower than for males (52 and 61 percent).”<sup>7</sup> While few faculty do not receive tenure, it is not clear whether a systematic disparity exists by gender or race/ethnicity. The Faculty Affairs Committee claims that, “apparent disparities in tenure rates by gender and race/ethnicity probably reflect substantive differences across academic fields as much as or more than differences by demographic groups...” **However, FOBA contends that the University has the ability to provide more accurate numbers and increased transparency regarding the success rate of tenure-track faculty.**

While the explanations provided are reasonable regarding the distribution of women across disciplines, Faculty Affairs provide no evidence that what has occurred at Penn State is true in all cases of non-tenure for racial/ethnic faculty. This lack of evidence is where anecdotal information exists to challenge Faculty Affairs’ conclusion. A number of tenured racial/ethnic minority faculty members report witnessing unfairness in the support and evaluation of racial/ethnic minority faculty on tenure-track. Lack of support includes tactics such as giving

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<sup>5</sup> There may have been other Black chancellors at the commonwealth campuses in the past, but the current information is not readily available.

<sup>6</sup> The 54% is the tenure rate for minority faculty and 59% is the tenure rate for non-minority faculty.

<sup>7</sup> The 52% is the tenure rate for females and 61% is the tenure rate for male faculty.

tenure-track racial/ethnic minority faculty additional administrative tasks of running academic programs or assigning large advising loads thereby reducing time spent on research.

No information is readily available about how staff members fare in the process of promotion, particularly Black staff. **We recommend that information regarding this process be made public and that procedures be established to increase the candidate pool for Black applicants for staff positions at the University.**

The data presented in this working paper illustrate a disparity between the stated university mantra that declares, “Fostering diversity must be recognized as being at the heart of our institutional viability and vitality and that the diversity should be a core value of the academic mission, and a priority of the institution.” (*A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State, preface*)

#### **Challenge 4: Changing the Reality of the Black Experience at Penn State**

FOBA’s monthly membership meetings and two Town Hall gatherings provided an opportunity for individuals to share their experiences as employees of Penn State. Current faculty, staff, and graduate students attended the meetings. The ideas discussed and feelings expressed are offered below:

##### **What has been your experience as a Black person at Penn State?**

- Many expressed a more positive experience in recent years associated with the increased hiring of additional Black faculty and staff.
- Some Black faculty and staff stated that there is a “constant need to re-educate” the larger Penn State community about issues related to Blacks at the University. With each new administration or strategic plan, “We have to start over, rather than build upon a solid foundation of past experiences.”
- There is a continuous discussion regarding how or why the lack of diversity is normative at Penn State and why the lack does not seem to register in the minds of decision makers.
- Several individuals described their Penn State experience as mixed and layered. One individual reported that his/her experiences over the past ten or fifteen years have covered the full gamut of both positive and negative experiences from significant racial prejudice, which included having items thrown at the individual, to the hurling of racial epithets as the individual moved about campus. However, the individual’s experiences became more positive after moving into an administrative position at the University.
- Moreover, testimonials from numerous Black faculty and staff indicate that racial and ethnic bias does, indeed, exist at Penn State. Such bias pollutes career advancement opportunities as well as promotion and tenure opportunities.
- There were accounts of overt racist actions such as the denial of crucial resources to covert spread of malicious rumors that create suspicion and perceptions of inadequacy of Black faculty. Consequently, some Black faculty mentioned that they feel obligated to

illuminate issues of diversity in their scholarly work to bring about change for social justice.

- Informants acknowledged that institutionalized racism exists in some aspects of Penn State and many feel pressured to “prove” their value within the department.
- Some noted that being Black often leads to the burden of diversity. “Disproportionately, we are involved in taking up tasks because we want change and to ensure that our voices are heard. Yet in the end, there is little change and these efforts do nothing to enhance our careers.”
- The most consistent comment was regarding isolation; it remains problematic at both the personal and professional levels. Some acknowledged that there is a support structure available, but many individuals noted “isolation always confronts us in what we do.” Many of our Black faculty and staff are forced to work alone, have no staff support, or are the only person of color in their units.
- Many staff members indicated that Blacks are overtaxed, dealing with disappointment and isolation constantly in addition to juggling multiple responsibilities without acknowledgment or reward. Additional responsibilities do not yield promotion or raises.
- Various individuals noted that White colleagues were supportive, but they really did not understand the nature of what it means to be a “minority” at a predominantly White institution.
- Some noted that efforts to collaborate or partner on projects and research were not advantageous and that they were often discouraged when seeking inclusion.
- Some find support through organizations like FOBA, but they felt little support on the job.
- Several individuals reported a constant battle to obtain needed support and resources. The relentless stress associated with these battles impinges on the productivity of Black faculty and staff.
- One faculty member indicated that there was an inequitable distribution of resources, exclusion from communications received by other faculty members and the assignment of a heavy teaching load.
- Black administrators also complained frequently about a lack of support, consistently reduced budgets or funding, and reduced resources. An inequitable distribution of graduate assistantships was also identified as an ongoing problem.
- Undermining decisions of Black administrators and staff was also a constant theme.
- Faculty concerns were expressed that some departments are still “ingrained” and “it’s difficult for people of color to gain tenure.” In addition, there are missed opportunities to

increase the number of Blacks at Penn State. Thus, the Colleges and Departments do not always make good use of the opportunity to hire additional Black faculty from the ranks of those individuals receiving Penn State fellowships and residencies.

- Other participants reported that their research and service that seek to amplify social justice and/or support people of color, gay, lesbian, and transgendered populations is marginalized in the academy. Additionally, Black junior faculty reported that their mentors, colleagues, and/or supervisors advised them to avoid conducting “too much” research on issues of diversity or research on specific racial or ethnic topics.
- Some reported that their mentors, colleagues, and/or supervisors advised them to abandon their race- and/or gender-related research agendas altogether for fear that promotion and tenure evaluators or well-regarded mainstream venues for scholarly publication would not value their work.
- Black faculty and staff, like other underrepresented groups, bring diverse themes to their scholarship, research, service, and teaching, increasing diversity in the curriculum, and introducing different forms of pedagogy, which have the potential to increase engagement of students within the campus community.
- Likewise, many agreed that the absence of diversity and dwindling diversity among Black faculty and staff sends a strong message regarding the lack of opportunities and possibilities for those representing diverse groups.
- Some indicated that it would be nice if there were a diverse pool of mentors at the University as the couple of programs providing this service lack cultural diversity.
- Many Black faculty and staff expressed concern over Town and Gown issues, quality of life, and educational concerns for their children.
- Participants indicated that failure to address community diversity issues reinforces practices that work against retention of people of color.
- Concerns were also expressed regarding the support given to Black administrators at all levels. It was noted that White individuals under the supervision of Black administrators are able to by-pass them and have their issues addressed by a White administrator. This situation undermines the Black administrator and weakens his or her position as a leader.

### **Why do Black Faculty and Staff Stay at Penn State?**

- Aside from Penn State’s reputation of exemplary research, teaching and service, many Black faculty and staff indicated that having a higher sense of purpose for their role at Penn State and a belief that their presence alone can bring about change causes them to remain at the university. In addition, some have found solidarity with other Black colleagues and believe their presence alone influences change. Most felt that what they do everyday has an impact on the lives of Black students and that is truly rewarding.

- While many of the same tensions exist and continue to challenge the Black community at Penn State, the overall University experience has improved.
- Every participant suggested that the University from the top-down needs to do more to improve and foster diversity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING DIVERSITY**

The Forum on Black Affairs has been appreciative of the collaborative relationship with Penn State's administration as well as the support provided at various junctures. Given this backdrop, our recommendations are provided in the spirit of continuing to support this fine University as it seeks to become a leader in the areas of diversity and inclusion.

### **1. Increase Efforts to Diversify University Administration and Other Positions**

**1.1.** It is recommended that the University take a more proactive approach to increasing and maintaining diversity and inclusion. This recommendation requires a systemic effort and top-down approach on the part of central administration. Central administration needs to be the model for the rest of the University by reflecting what diversity can and should be at the University. Our concern is evidenced in the statistics presented earlier about the demographic make-up of the President's Council, chancellors at the campuses, and the deans at University Park. We want to see more visible representation of Blacks and women in the upper levels of leadership.

**1.2.** For Penn State to be more proactive and inclusive, there needs to be an increased institutional commitment to equity in recruitment, hiring, retention, and career advancement, especially at the Commonwealth Campuses, where there is an absence of diverse faculty and staff in relation to the number of diverse students on the campuses. The same mechanism of recruiting diverse faculty and staff cannot continue to be used. Additionally, success will require not approving searches to go forward without a competitive short list of qualified female and racially/ethnically diverse candidates.

**1.3.** One mechanism that should be implemented is to, first, make all employee searches transparent. All searches would be required to submit to the Office of Affirmative Action information about how they intend to search for candidates, to report what they actually did, and to document the number of applicants based on demographic data and qualifications, as well as to list as much as possible similar data about the candidates on the short-list. The demographic information about the candidate selected should be public knowledge as well. Furthermore, this mechanism would require that a public summary document regarding the demographics of the pool of candidates for senior-level positions (to increase transparency and accountability) be available. It is also important to continue to invite and include FOBA, the Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity (CORED) and the other Commissions to be a part of all future searches.

- 1.4. Increased diversity in the Office of Human Resources is needed. Similar to the demographic make-up of central administrators, this office should model the diversity we want to see across the University. FOBA also recommends that the University hire an outside employment/search firm that specializes in diversity to conduct a review of Penn State's operations to ensure that all possible steps are being taken to foster a diverse workforce. Without visible diversity of qualified personnel administrators, recruiting Blacks is made more difficult. The employment/search process should be one that generates the type of diverse workforce that is consistent with the University's articulated vision.
- 1.5. The University needs to increase its efforts in the hiring of racial/ethnic minority staff assistants, physical plant staff, and auxiliary service staff. Such an action will also improve Town and Gown relations, increase networking, partnerships, relationships and a sense of belonging within the Penn State community. Greater diversity increases the attractiveness of Penn State (for persons from diverse backgrounds as well as others who value diversity).
- 1.6. Increased diversity should be routinely acknowledged and rewarded. Such acknowledgment should be within and across departments, units, and colleges. While the Commissions and the Office of Multicultural Resources acknowledge individuals' diversity efforts, it is not evident that the University has a system in place that acknowledges and rewards individuals as well as units, departments, or programs for their efforts and best practices.

## **2. Strengthen and Require Regular Diversity Training and Accountability**

The Forum on Black Affairs is appreciative of the President's response to recent acts of insensitivity or bias and the resulting public announcements, which reminded the entire University community that these behaviors are not reflective of our beliefs and values. We recommend the establishment and promotion of exemplars of best practice that must be implemented for effective diversity management. In essence, Penn State needs to make diversity initiatives more sustainable, not simply as a reaction to overt episodic events.

For example, President Erickson has sent out regular messages about the position of the university regarding the sex abuse scandal. The two messages that stand out are (a) the periodic emails from the President about sex abuse resources and (b) President Erickson's promise to the University community (<http://president.psu.edu/goals>), specifically (a) to "reinforce the moral imperative of doing the right thing—the first time, every time"; and (b) to lead by example. Part of this promise included revisiting all standards, policies, and programs, to reorient the Penn State culture, and to ensure proper governance and oversight across the University.

- 2.1. FOBA recommends that the University revises its diversity policies at Penn State or create additional ones. Several Penn State policies exist that specifically address intolerance (AD29) and nondiscrimination and harassment (AD41; AD42); and fair employment/affirmative action practices (HR01 & HR11). While these policies serve as the foundation for the healthy growth of diversity at Penn State, they do not create the

expectation of what must or should occur once intolerance, discrimination, and harassment have been minimized or reduced.

- 2.2. Diversity training should be routinely required of all University employees, including graduate assistants. To do so will require expanding staff in and increasing resources through the Office of Affirmative Action and the Office of Human Resources. Funding should be allocated to hire additional diversity trainers and initiatives for implementing new training modules, webinars and community building. Thus, FOBA believes that diversity standards or competencies should be included in the Staff Review and Development Plan (SRDP) as well as for the new review process for all employees. Having a diversity policy that specifies annual diversity training for all employees would be a significant step in changing the climate at Penn State and make the entire community more welcoming. The policy should also address the consequences when employees do not follow through with training.
- 2.3. All University administrators need to be more visible in promoting positive efforts to diversify the University in a sustained and systematic fashion. For example, institutional leaders, including unit and department administrators, deans, and provosts should actively immerse themselves in the hiring process by; evaluating the attractiveness of a program or department regarding the hiring of diverse individuals, assessing the climate of the unit for diversity, evaluating hiring criteria, reviewing job descriptions, creating diverse competent search committees, selecting chairs for the search committee, ensuring that the broader pool is diverse, monitoring outreach initiatives, and supporting efforts to ensure that qualified diverse candidates have been encouraged to apply. FOBA, CORED, Commission for Women, and the Commission on LGBTE have volunteered to meet with candidates while visiting the University. Some units need to be applauded for their efforts in this matter, but the expectation needs to be extended to other units.

### **3. Increase Oversight and Accountability of the Diversity Strategic Plan**

- 3.1. FOBA recommends that the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity be provided with additional authority to hold units accountable for weak diversity plans and poor implementation and follow through. In 1998, the University implemented the initial “Framework to Foster Diversity.” FOBA agrees with the University’s premise that “Fostering diversity must be recognized as being at the heart of our institutional viability and vitality, a core value of the academic mission, and a priority of the institution.” While we believe this premise has been the University’s intention, we believe more is needed to foster and implement a sustainable level of diversity at Penn State. Since 1998, the goal of the diversity plans has been to incorporate diversity throughout the University’s strategic plan. We understand the rationale for doing so; diversity should be an integral aspect of the entire University, but there is little evidence that diversity has been fully integrated into every aspect of the University.
- 3.2. As a result, we recommend a two-pronged approach to the implement diversity throughout the University. The diversity plan should be integrated into the strategic plan of all units. But the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity should also have

oversight for the implementation of all diversity plans. Without such oversight, there is no objective mechanism in place to actually track implementation—the successes and failures—as well as expectations of accountability for lack of effort on the part of units.

**3.3.** The issue of accountability in regard to diversity also emerged from the recommendations of the Core Council committee. However, what was most discerning about the Core Council's recommendations was the lack of input from diverse members of the University. In fact, this lack of diversity contributed to preliminary recommendations that would have gutted several key offices and reversed the limited progress that has been achieved to date. For example, the multicultural coordinators in the colleges were one of the targets of these retrenchment efforts. While a review of the roles and responsibilities of the multicultural coordinators is important to ensure their effectiveness, it is unacceptable that some administrators question their efficacy, especially when there is limited support, isolation, and no obvious commitment to diversity within these units. This concern is all the more reason for the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity to be given increased ability to make critical decisions regarding diversity initiatives and their implementation in an effective manner.

#### **4. Increase Accountability for the Retention of Black Faculty and Staff**

**4.1.** Based on a combination of statistics and anecdotal evidence reported earlier, it is recommended that there be increased oversight in the promotion and tenure process of Black faculty as well as the promotion process of Black staff. Points 4.2 to 4.5 focus on the faculty process, and points 4.6 to 4.8 address staff recommendations.

**4.2.** This expanded oversight should be in place at the time of a faculty member's first review, which is typically conducted in the second year of the tenure process, and monitoring should continue until the tenure process has been completed. The rationale for the early oversight is that Black faculty's tenure status is often in jeopardy at an early stage and this process cannot be reversed at the sixth-year review. By monitoring the faculty's progress early on, there is still time to correct unfair procedures or processes that may be in place. Furthermore, such oversight would increase the faculty's knowledge about their own rights. Too often these faculty are unaware of the Senior Faculty Mentor or they are reticent about inequity or unfairness, for fear of retaliation by senior faculty in their units.

**4.3.** FOBA recommends sharing the oversight between the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity. While the Senior Faculty Mentor needs to report to the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, little oversight and change can occur without the person serving in this capacity also reporting directly to the President, which had been the original organizational format.

**4.4.** We strongly recommend revisiting the scope and role of the current role of the Senior Faculty Mentor, which was established as a part-time position. It is not possible for a single individual, without staff or assistants, to provide services and oversight of several campuses. The position is another critical example of splitting functions and overloading faculty and watering down support to Black faculty. Through the oversight

process, if it is found that a faculty member has been unfairly treated, it is recommended that this matter be addressed immediately by central administration and not be left solely in the hands of the academic unit. Such an oversight process will lend additional support to faculty members that are being unfairly treated.

- 4.5. In addition to oversight, there needs to be some form of accountability in place for units that show a systematic pattern of creating an unfair tenure-process for Black faculty. Without consequences, there is no reason to believe that such units will choose to change entrenched inequitable practices.
- 4.6. In regard to qualified staff and mid-level administrators, there should be increased opportunity for both to achieve promotion. Although the Administrative Fellows Program serves faculty and staff, we believe an additional Staff Mentorship Programs for Blacks and other underrepresented groups would be helpful in creating a pipeline for diverse staff to successfully move into administrative positions.
- 4.7. The proposed programs would include several components, including annual professional development training and structured opportunities for career advancement. These initiatives would increase support and reduce the sense of isolation for Black staff. Although there are currently extensive professional development training programs for staff, none of these programs target the distinctive concerns of Blacks, nor do they provide avenues for career advancement.
- 4.8. The proposed mentoring program would provide consultations and serve as a liaison with supervisors of other units, create additional partnerships and support, and address a range of issues from career development and problem solving to the handling of sensitive issues.

## **5. Expand the Vision of Scholarship**

There is a need to assess and reward faculty achievements based on a more inclusive definition of scholarship that includes non-traditional forms of research and new forms of scholarly, creative, or pedagogical activities—some of which might be made possible, primarily, through new media and digital technologies. An expanded vision of scholarship and the structure for assessing and rewarding faculty achievements should benefit all, including Black faculty and other underrepresented faculty. Efforts need to be increased to educate program coordinators, department heads, members of promotion and tenure committees, and other evaluators about expanding their vision of teaching, research, and scholarship to include issues of diversity.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is the intent of this working paper to highlight the challenges that Black faculty and staff confront at Penn State, the negative impact on the daily experiences of Black faculty, staff, and administrators at Penn State, and bring to light the inadequacies of the current diversity efforts. With this information serving as a foundation, we have presented a series of recommendations to enhance the overall climate at the University for all stakeholders. FOBA believes that the implementation of these recommendations will allow Penn State to regain its status as an

acknowledged champion of diversity and become a more inclusive and diverse institution. FOBA looks forward to the discussion of the report and its recommendations with university officials and is committed to working collaboratively to facilitate their implementation.

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