



# UH Hilo Community–Anchored Strategic Vision for 2030

**Introduction:** This document was inspired and extensively shaped by the community members who have invested substantial time, energy, and other resources to establish and nurture UH Hilo and who have shared their invaluable insight and vision regarding its future. Drafted by Faculty Congress leaders, this document is not intended to be a complete strategic plan, but rather to articulate a shared vision and outline key goals and actions needed to achieve the vision. The absence of a strategic plan at UH Hilo has been a significant concern raised repeatedly by Faculty Congress since 2016, and we appreciate the recent efforts by UH Hilo administration to remedy this. In response to concerns about the current [draft strategic plan from administration](#) and lack of a model for sustainability, we present this alternative and seek feedback from key stakeholders – community members, students, staff, and faculty – to improve it. We also look forward to joining forces with these stakeholders, UH Hilo administration, and key legislative and county leaders to achieve our shared vision.

**Background and Context:** Hawaii Island is a rural county with an economy that is currently dependent on state and federal funding<sup>1</sup>, the lowest median income in the state<sup>2</sup>, and the highest percent of the population living in poverty<sup>3</sup> and on Medicaid<sup>4</sup> (which costs the state over \$6,400 per enrollee per year<sup>5</sup> or more than \$220M for Hawaii County annually). The relatively small tourism business in Hilo largely shifted to West Hawaii with growth of sun-soaked resorts and the opening of Kona International Airport in 1970, the year UH Hilo was officially established as a university. Agriculture faded as an economic engine with the death of the Big Island sugar export industry in the mid-1990s<sup>6</sup>. UH Hilo grew to a peak enrollment of over 4,100 students a decade ago with strong advocacy and support particularly from the East Hawaii community. **UH Hilo currently remains the sole viable major economic engine for Hawaii Island, particularly East Hawaii, as an exporter of education (to other islands, states, and nations) that also enhances the vibrancy of the community.** Every 1,000 students at UH Hilo adds approximately \$52.5 million of spending into the Hawaii County economy each year<sup>7</sup>, generating an estimated 577 local jobs and \$4.7M in state tax revenue<sup>8</sup>. In addition, UH Hilo generates extramural funding, mostly from federal awards, which also peaked about a decade ago averaging over \$20M per year, which also generates local economic impact and state tax revenue. While the value of higher education in advancing economic progress is compelling, its core role in **advancing human development is invaluable**<sup>9</sup>. As a comprehensive public liberal arts and sciences university committed to this core role, **UH Hilo’s location – in the heart of the Big Island natural environment, history, culture, and community – is its greatest strategic resource, unparalleled in the state and world for nourishing educational excellence if properly utilized for differential advantage.**

**A decade of drift and decline:** From 1970 to 2010, UH Hilo grew rapidly – faster than national undergraduate

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as “14 percent or more of average annual labor and proprietors' earnings derived from Federal and State government or 9 percent of total employment during 2010-12” (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-typology-codes/descriptions-and-maps/>)

<sup>2</sup> [https://census.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/acs2019\\_1-yr\\_DBEDT-highlights.pdf](https://census.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/acs2019_1-yr_DBEDT-highlights.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=347&periodId=4523&localeId=14>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Hawaii-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/scorecard/how-much-states-spend-per-medicaid-enrollee/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/HISTORY-OF-AGRICULTURE-IN-HAWAII.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> David Hammes, Emeritus Professor of Economics, UH Hilo College of Business; updated economic impact analysis of UH Hilo student enrollment, June 12, 2021

<sup>8</sup> <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/UHSystemImpact2021.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-017-0001-8>

enrollment<sup>10</sup> and faster than Hawaii Island population growth<sup>11</sup> – with active support from community leaders. Over the past decade, the decline in UH Hilo performance indicators (particularly student enrollment, which is now under 3,200, extramural funding, which is now about \$14M per year, and faculty/staff morale, which – along with HCC – is lowest across the 10-campus system<sup>12</sup>) coincides with the erosion of meaningful shared governance<sup>13</sup> and connections with the Big Island community. The loss of its community anchor has set UH Hilo adrift and is evident in the following events:

- ◆ Elimination of the Senior Community Relations position in the Chancellor’s cabinet
- ◆ Termination of community experts in teaching roles
- ◆ Dissolution of Hui Ka Ua, a nonprofit funded and established by community leaders in 2007 to support UH Hilo students and faculty, due to lack of support by UH Hilo senior administration
- ◆ Discontinuation of donor support for the Dorrance Scholarship Program, which supported first-generation students at UH Hilo<sup>14</sup> (the only campus in Hawaii chosen for this program), due to lack of support by UH Hilo senior administration
- ◆ Protracted resolution of Mauna Kea stewardship
- ◆ Prioritization of spending on administration over activities that generate revenue and community impact (i.e., teaching and grants)<sup>15</sup>

***Our Strategic Vision: UH Hilo will be a student-centered, community-anchored model of higher education where learners from any place are enlightened through Hawaii Island as a special place to find purpose, develop skills for success, and take action to make the world a better place.***

**Strategic Goals to Achieve by 2030 and Short-term Actions to Set the Course:** UH Hilo will:

**Restore and secure its community anchor** through the following actions:

*Immediately:*

- ◆ Create and implement a leadership structure that is accountable to the community, starting with a Community Advisory Board that plays a key role in executive hires and ensures ethical, diverse, visionary, competent leaders with proven leadership record and strong commitment to the Big Island community and to transparency and shared governance.

*Within two years:*

- ◆ Formally incorporate community experts into the curriculum in alignment with advanced models of rural development<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ Increase the use of facilities for community events and services (including dorms, laboratories, fitness facilities, etc.)
- ◆ Establish seamless pathways and early advising<sup>17</sup> for Hawaii Community College and high school students to successfully transition to a UH Hilo degree program, including consideration of a merger with HCC as a potential approach to optimizing the success of students from the Big Island

<sup>10</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

<sup>11</sup> [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/census/Census\\_2010/PL94-171/pltable1\\_Island.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/census/Census_2010/PL94-171/pltable1_Island.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.hawaii.edu/offices/app/faculty/2018\\_Faculty\\_Worklife\\_Survey-Final.pdf](https://www.hawaii.edu/offices/app/faculty/2018_Faculty_Worklife_Survey-Final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://hilo.hawaii.edu/congress/motions/2020-2021/documents/motions/20-21/20-21-](https://hilo.hawaii.edu/congress/motions/2020-2021/documents/motions/20-21/20-21-007AccesstoBudgetInformation.pdf)

[007AccesstoBudgetInformation.pdf](https://hilo.hawaii.edu/congress/motions/2020-2021/documents/motions/20-21/20-21-007AccesstoBudgetInformation.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.dorrancescholarship.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/HI\\_firstgen\\_Final.pdf](http://www.dorrancescholarship.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/HI_firstgen_Final.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/congress/motions/2020-2021/documents/motions/20-21/StatementonBudgetCutsADA.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Lowe P, Phillipson J, Proctor A, Gkartzios M. Expertise in rural development: A conceptual and empirical analysis. *World Development*, 2019 Apr 1;116:28-37.

<sup>17</sup> Lavinson R. [Articulation Agreements Are Just a Small Part of the Answer](#), *Inside Higher Ed*, January 28, 2021.



- ◆ Incentivize faculty research and other scholarly activities and service in the local community

**Grow student enrollment to 7,000**, while enhancing student-faculty interactions that are a hallmark of UH Hilo, through the following actions:

*Immediately:*

- ◆ Remove the cap on non-resident students and establish affordable tuition rates appropriate for Hawaii residents, US mainland and international students
- ◆ Redeploy faculty and staff as needed to support enrollment growth and rebuild trust, ensuring workforce loss only through natural voluntary attrition, and correct the adverse human resources practices that have contributed to decline in morale, including addressing noncompliance with UH policy and UHPA contract regarding workload and establishing accountability for equitable and transparent workload standards that value individualized support for student success<sup>18</sup>.
- ◆ Focus recruitment practices and priorities to ensure a pipeline of high quality instructional faculty to support the strategic vision and student enrollment goal

*Within two years:*

- ◆ Adopt a student-centered model of customized education that ensures success for diverse, first generation, and non-traditional students by fully embracing:
  - Competency-based, time-variable model that offers accelerated and decelerated degree paths and that is uncompromising on learning
  - Flexible delivery models, including adding:
    - programs that feature in-person, Big Island immersion experiences
    - online courses and completely online degree programs that provide individualized support and easy access to course instructors
- ◆ Create a distinct, adaptive curriculum that:
  - Builds on the current foundation of degree programs in the arts and sciences, which feature broadly relevant critical thinking and creative expression skills, to offer concentrations in existing programs (e.g., green chemistry certificate for chemistry majors) and cross-cutting concentrations (e.g., leadership certificate for any major) that target current workforce needs, including offering these certificates and other professional development programs at a discount to UH Hilo graduates
  - Strengthens existing professional and graduate degree courses through synergistic cross-fertilization (e.g., counseling psychology courses for pharmacy and nursing students, Hawaiian culture courses for TCBS students, environmental sciences courses for counseling psychology students) and offer these to advanced undergraduates to get an early start on a graduate degree
  - Adds new programs in areas that leverage existing expertise and the Big Island location (e.g., environmental health sciences, pharmaceutical agriculture)
  - Features a comprehensive range of world issues, areas of study, languages and cultures, and expanded heritage studies spanning Pacific Rim cultures that are woven throughout comprehensive undergraduate degree programs and specialized graduate and professional degree programs
  - Makes UH Hilo the university of choice for:

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<sup>18</sup> E.g., <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/congress/motions/2020-2021/documents/motions/20-21/Motion20-21-025MotiononWorkloadIssuesARB.pdf>



- Hawaii residents who want a personalized world-class education with unique opportunities for applied learning in areas of local, regional, and/or international importance
- Native Hawaiians and other indigenous peoples seeking higher education that is deeply connected to culture, revitalization, and place
- US mainland and international students who want to better understand and change the world (and earn a degree along the way) via the lens of the unique Big Island blend of rural, local, and international perspectives, cultures, populations, and histories.
- ◆ Implement evidence-based practices to improve organizational performance and accountability and shift the trajectory towards performance excellence, including a robust performance measurement system that builds an adaptive culture based on assessment and program review, prioritization of student success, efficient and effective use of resources, and shifting spending away from administration and back to the core mission-based revenue generators – teaching and extramural funding<sup>19</sup>
- ◆ Build relationships with potential feeder communities (e.g., towns, schools, populations, employers) in targeted locations around the world and develop customized, streamlined education pathways for them (e.g., certificate programs, articulation agreements, etc.)
- ◆ Create and leverage the Big Island as a distinguished brand, including
  - UH Hilo tag line... *Because It's a Big Island, Small World*
  - Vulcan athletics program
  - Kukui nut and lehua blossom lei at graduation as the symbol of enlightenment from Hawaii Island (concept launched by Hui Ka Ua)
  - Visiting scholar / sabbatical program for faculty from other universities
  - Hosting kupuna and other local talent and expertise
  - Educational Big Island tours and experiences for visiting family and friends of students
  - Annual UH Hilo education expo featuring scholarly works in the arts and sciences (the “Merrie Monarch” of educational events)
  - Establish new traditions that further distinguish and celebrate UH Hilo and that support alumni engagement (e.g., planting ohia trees along Nowelo Street in honor of students, employees, and community members who have brought international acclaim to UH Hilo – a pathway of “stars” leading to Mauna Kea)

**Grow extramural funding to \$25M per year through the following actions:**

*Immediately:*

- ◆ Establish appropriate incentives for generating extramural awards and mentoring new PIs (e.g., workload credits)
- ◆ Prioritize spending indirect funds on generating future extramural awards
- ◆ Provide appropriate staff support and implement standardized, streamlined procedures for both pre-award and post-award

*Within two years:*

- ◆ Leverage the track record of funding success in areas of expertise (e.g., tropical conservation biology and environmental sciences, Pacific aquaculture and agriculture, Native Hawaiian culture and language, rural health, pharmaceutical sciences, geographic information systems, and data sciences) to

<sup>19</sup> <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/congress/minutes/documents/minutes/FacultyCongressMinutesfromNovember2020Meeting-CL-ADA.pdf>



expand and increase the impact of extramurally funded research and education collaborations statewide and globally

- ◆ Utilize the assets available through Big Island-based institutions, such as the US Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center, to increase extramural funding
- ◆ Foster and market innovations that support Big Island sustainability (e.g., co-developing consumer products that are made with locally sourced ingredients and tested in UH Hilo laboratories)

**Grow donor support to ???M per year through the following actions**

*Immediately:*

- ◆ Establish a formal donor relationship management program that ensures effective communication and donor satisfaction and that engages alumni in meaningful ways across generations and life stages

*Within two years:*

- ◆ Create giving opportunities that align with targeted students, curriculum, research, and branding (e.g., first generation scholarships, visiting scholars, annual education expo, etc.) and that prioritize financial support based on individual, family, and community need.

**Monitor and document progress toward the vision through the following actions:**

*Immediately:*

- ◆ Establish detailed timelines and assign resources and accountability for each of the above short-term actions
- ◆ Establish an annual review process that includes tracking progress on these actions and identifying new actions needed to address challenges and opportunities and publishing an annual report that features UH Hilo's role in the human development of our students and community

**Demonstrate robust economic impact to Hawaii County and return on investment to the State**

*Immediately:*

- ◆ Develop models of economic sustainability, as demonstrated below, that are updated and published annually.



<b>ANNUALLY at UH Hilo</b>	<b>Decade ago</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>2030</b>
State general funds invested in UH Hilo	\$ 30,000,000	\$ 38,000,000	\$ 40,000,000
Student enrollment	4100	3100	7000
Extramural funding	\$ 21,000,000	\$ 14,000,000	\$ 25,000,000
<b>Economic impact to Hawaii County (per David Hammes)</b>			
from student enrollment	\$ 215,250,000	\$ 162,750,000	\$ 290,500,000
from extramural awards	\$ 34,650,000	\$ 23,100,000	\$ 41,250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 249,900,000</b>	<b>\$ 185,850,000</b>	<b>\$ 331,750,000</b>
<b>Total business sales produced by each \$1 of state general fund spending on UH Hilo</b>			
	<b>\$ 8.33</b>	<b>\$ 4.89</b>	<b>\$ 8.29</b>
<b>Number of jobs from economic impact (per UHERO)</b>			
from student enrollment	2368	1790	3196
from extramural awards	468	312	557
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2836</b>	<b>2102</b>	<b>3752</b>
<b>State tax revenue generated (per UHERO)</b>			
from student enrollment	\$ 19,372,500	\$ 14,647,500	\$ 26,145,000
from extramural awards	\$ 3,465,000	\$ 2,310,000	\$ 4,125,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 22,837,500</b>	<b>\$ 16,957,500</b>	<b>\$ 30,270,000</b>
<b>Total state tax revenue generated by each \$1 of state general fund spending on UH Hilo</b>			
	<b>\$ 0.76</b>	<b>\$ 0.45</b>	<b>\$ 0.76</b>
<b>Total state tax revenue generated by each \$1 of state general fund spending UH-wide</b>			
		<b>\$ 0.37</b>	
<b>State Medicaid cost reduction due to jobs</b>			
from student enrollment	\$ 7,619,420	\$ 5,761,025	\$ 10,283,119
from extramural awards	\$ 1,505,300	\$ 1,003,533	\$ 1,792,024
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 9,124,719</b>	<b>\$ 6,764,558</b>	<b>\$ 12,075,143</b>
<b>ROI to State</b>			
<b>Dollars</b>	<b>\$ 31,962,219</b>	<b>\$ 23,722,058</b>	<b>\$ 42,345,143</b>
<b>Total state return on investment in each \$1 of state general fund spending on UH Hilo</b>			
	<b>\$ 1.07</b>	<b>\$ 0.62</b>	<b>\$ 1.06</b>

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

- current mix of resident and non-resident, undergraduate and graduate students across models
- current tuition rates across models
- 2030 economic impact assumes 2,000 students are 100% distance learning and not located in Hawaii County
- economic impact multipliers for Hawaii County estimated by David Hammes
- state tax revenue and number of jobs estimated by UHERO
- conservatively, 50% of jobs eliminate need/eligibility for Medicaid (<https://www.epi.org/publication/one-in-nine-u-s-workers-are-paid-wages-that-can-leave-them-in-poverty-even-when-working-full-time/>)

