

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan

Vision

Empowering students to reach their full potential

Mission

UH Hilo's Division of Student Affairs comprises a team of dedicated and qualified professionals who cultivate an inclusive and supportive environment, empowering the personal and academic goals of all students.

Guiding Principles: Impactful, Compassionate, and Inclusive

At the core of our mission lie powerful guiding principles that drive our actions, define our identity, and drive our culture:

Student-Centered, Engaged Learning

Our unwavering focus is on the growth and transformation of our students. Beyond classroom learning, we offer experiential opportunities and cultural programming, empowering students to thrive and contribute actively to their communities. We foster an environment that is nurturing, inclusive, and encourages students to embrace and celebrate their successes.

Health & Wellbeing

We prioritize the wellbeing of every individual within our community. Creating a sense of belonging and safe spaces for all is paramount. We advocate for mental and physical health, ensure access to basic needs, and foster meaningful social connections. Recognizing the importance of balance in personal and professional life, we support holistic wellbeing.

Equity, Justice, and Belonging

We acknowledge the historical and institutional inequities that have affected many. We honor the indigenous people and culture of Hawaii, while valuing and welcoming each other across diverse social identities. As a division and as individuals, we commit to breaking down systemic barriers, striving to create an equitable campus culture for marginalized and underrepresented groups. We dedicate ourselves to fostering spaces that inspire, prepare, engage, and celebrate our students in their journey of self-discovery, learning, and action. Our efforts align with the campus values of student equity and success, 'āina, and campus community. Specifically, the Ka'ao Framework will be at the heart of our efforts to honor and respect the indigenous people and culture of Hawaii. We will integrate traditional knowledge, practices, and stories into our programs, ensuring that our actions and initiatives are rooted in cultural understanding. By fostering cultural competence, we create a community that respects and appreciates diversity, while preserving and celebrating the unique heritage of the land we inhabit.

Collaborative & Innovative

Collaboration and innovation are the driving forces behind our endeavors. We foster cross-campus initiatives that promote student success, cultural education, and professional growth. By working together, we seek creative solutions and make a positive impact on our community. Collaboration and shared governance exemplify our commitment to collective progress through divisional and institutional committee work.

Our strategic plan is a roadmap towards empowering students to reach their full potential. Through meaningful engagement, inclusive environments, comprehensive support services, organizational excellence, and evidence-driven decision-making, we will create a nurturing and thriving campus community where every student can flourish and achieve their dreams.

*For details around our planning process and driving philosophies, see "Appendices"

Divisional Goals

Goal 1: Empowering Student Success and Fostering a Sense of Belonging

At the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH), our vision to educate more students and empower them for meaningful contributions to society hinges on a comprehensive approach that emphasizes early engagement, lasting support, and fostering an inclusive campus community. Through collaborative efforts, UHH is committed to creating an environment where every student feels valued, heard, and supported, enabling them to thrive academically, personally, and culturally.

- Cultivating Meaningful Connections
 - Forge partnerships with schools and community organizations to create a comprehensive enrollment engagement strategy that provides personal outreach to prospective students, addressing their unique needs, while developing dynamic social media and communication campaigns to generate interest and excitement about UH Hilo's offerings and events.
 - Facilitate in-person and virtual visits for families to address questions and provide support during various points of exploring admission and orientation to UHH.
 - Simplify the admission and onboarding processes by introducing streamlined procedures and a new student fee that covers essential services.
 - Establish a peer mentor program to facilitate meaningful connections between incoming students and their peers and ensure a seamless transition for new students into UHH.
- Seamless Transition to Success
 - Design customized opportunities for students and families during their transition to UH Hilo, including bridge programs and orientation sessions.
 - Offer an onboarding checklist and success guide designed to engage and support in the first year of enrollment.
 - Introduce immersive activities rooted in the Ka'ao framework to familiarize new students with the local culture.
 - Organize engaging activities and opportunities during new student welcome week to foster a vibrant and inclusive campus community.
- Inclusive Spaces and Campus Unity
 - Evaluate and establish culturally appropriate spaces to ensure an inclusive environment that encourages and promotes various student means for expression.
 - Implement workshops and discussions to promote cultural competency and understanding.
 - Revise policies, practices, and paperwork to eliminate barriers and foster genuine belonging.
 - Enhance inclusivity and support within residence halls, from room selection to roommate matching.
- Connections and Vulcan Pride
 - Instill a strong sense of Vulcan pride and identity through campus-wide celebrations and affirming initiatives.
 - Showcase our diversity through inclusive events, cultural celebrations, and a comprehensive calendar.
 - Offer cohort engagement opportunities such as living-learning communities, community service days, and diversity leadership retreats for personal growth and connections.
 - Provide tailored support for international students, notably those who have underperformed and/or have historically struggled, to acclimate and feel at home within the UHH community.

Goal 2: Empowering Student Thriving and Elevating Student Wellbeing and Support

Our aspiration is both simple and profound: to kindle the flame of excellence within each student, fostering growth academically and personally. Recognizing the vital role of a nurturing and compassionate environment, we are steadfast in our commitment to offer comprehensive support services and resources, tailored to the diverse needs of our students. Our dedication ensures that every student has ample opportunity to flourish and achieve their fullest potential.

- **Holistic Wellbeing Strategy**
 - Employ surveys and questionnaires to gain deep insights into our students' challenges and concerns, guiding the customization of our support services.
 - Establish a Care Team comprising dedicated professionals who collaborate with stakeholders to shape an inclusive and compassionate strategy for student wellbeing.
 - Provide clear guidelines and resources to foster overall wellbeing, emphasizing peer mentoring and the creation of a supportive community.
 - Create an inclusive hub for accommodations, accessibility, and advocacy, uniting disability services, veteran support, and the diversity center.
- **Culturally Relevant Mental Wellbeing Initiatives**
 - Infuse cultural responsiveness into our mental health support, educating our community on supporting mental wellbeing with cultural sensitivity to tailor responsiveness to diverse student communities, ensuring that our support deeply resonates.
 - Attune support and intervention services to the unique needs of each individual by applying the healing principles of ho'oponopono, promoting understanding and healing.
 - Recognize the significance of providing unbiased basic needs support, exemplified through the creation of a genderless closet integrated into our broader efforts.
- **Campus-Wide Wellbeing Education**
 - Establish a central destination where students can access a diverse range of support services and resources.
 - Facilitate cross-collaboration among services, ensuring a holistic approach to student care.
 - Empower with training programs to identify signs of distress, enabling timely referrals to support services.
 - Deploy evidence-based prevention programs and workshops that equip students with coping skills and sound decision-making abilities.
- **Graduation and Beyond**
 - Organize regular workshops addressing study skills, time management, and stress management to equip underrepresented students with essential tools for success.
 - Collaborate with Academic Affairs to establish a central hub that houses Advising, Career Services, and the Transfer Center to facilitate easy access to comprehensive support.
 - Create a centralized online repository of resources, tools, and information related to academic planning, career exploration, and transfer pathways.
 - Connect students with alumni in opportunities for mentorship and guidance; in hosting panels to share insights about life and career paths and goals; in networking opportunities to foster connections.

Goal 3: Empowering Operational Excellence and Staff Wellbeing

Our pursuit of greatness transcends academic endeavors and extends to the very fabric of our division. Through the fusion of innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement, we are cultivating an environment that embraces transparency, accountability, and professional growth. This holistic approach empowers our staff, propelling the Division of Student Affairs toward new heights of efficiency and excellence.

- **Strategic Growth and Development**
 - Collaborate with a Student Enrollment Management (SEM) consultant to design a comprehensive plan for strategic student recruitment, engagement, and enrollment.
 - Develop transparent financial planning processes aligned with divisional goals, enabling efficient allocation of resources and shared support.
 - Establish cross-functional committees that promote collaboration, diversity of thought, and innovative problem-solving to address challenges and seize opportunities.
 - Launch an integrated platform that combines professional development, mentorship opportunities, and wellness resources to empower staff growth.
- **Efficiency and Innovation Enhancement**
 - Implement an automated student service lifecycle using technology to streamline processes, ensuring a seamless and positive student experience.
 - Leverage technology to create accessible reporting mechanisms and scorecards for transparent assessment and performance tracking.
 - Reevaluate existing programs based on student feedback, reallocating resources to invest in student-centric initiatives that drive engagement and satisfaction.
 - Explore flexible work arrangements, remote options, and adaptable hours to promote work-life balance and support staff wellbeing.
- **Data-Driven Progress and Improvement**
 - Conduct regular student satisfaction surveys to gather insights and feedback, using the data to enhance program effectiveness and overall student experience.
 - Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for each strategic goal, allowing for continuous monitoring and adjustments to ensure alignment with objectives.
 - Engage in benchmarking studies to learn from peer institutions, adopting best practices and pushing boundaries for ongoing improvement.
 - Create a resource-sharing platform that facilitates collaboration and the exchange of insights, best practices, and innovative ideas among staff.
- **Culture of Empowerment and Holistic Wellbeing**
 - Develop a comprehensive onboarding experience that fosters a sense of belonging, engagement, and pride for new staff members.
 - Introduce inclusive shared workspaces that inspire creativity, collaboration, and innovation while cultivating a positive and supportive atmosphere.
 - Implement wellness workshops, fitness challenges, and mental health resources to promote staff wellbeing and encourage a culture of self-care.
 - Establish mentorship programs, peer support networks, and leadership development initiatives to enhance professional growth and create a sense of community.

Next Steps

Implementing a strategic plan involves carefully organized steps to ensure its successful execution:

- Form cross-functional teams for action planning
 - Appoint a team lead to coordinate efforts and report progress
- Break down strategies and deliverables into actionable tasks
 - Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) for each strategy
- Establish a tracking and reporting system for monitoring progress
 - Set clear timelines, milestones, and deadlines
- Allocate necessary resources for successful implementation
- Emphasize continuous improvement
 - Regularly review and assess implemented strategies
 - Gather feedback from students, staff, and faculty to identify areas for improvement
- Use data-driven insights for informed strategy adjustments
- Provide training and development for staff involved in execution
 - Ensure staff have required skills and resources for their roles
- Maintain consistent reporting and communication
 - Celebrate achievements and milestones
- Conduct annual reporting and program review
- Renew the strategic plan as needed for continued effectiveness

Appendices

Introduction

The 2023-2026 Division of Student Affairs (DSA) strategic plan is a powerful roadmap, charting our collective journey with students and providing a clear direction for our division. It is firmly rooted in our guiding principles and aligns with the priorities of the University of Hawaii system and University of Hawaii at Hilo (UH Hilo), addressing the evolving needs of our students. To shape this plan, we embarked on an inclusive six-month process, gathering valuable input from a diverse range of stakeholders:

- Dedicated Staff across the Division
- Insightful Undergraduate and Graduate Students
- Supportive Campus Partners

Our quest for this strategic plan commenced on January 31, 2023, with a town hall meeting led by Dr. Chris Holland, the Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Dr. Holland shared insights from his comprehensive "look, listen, and learn" tour of DSA, a 90-day exploration of our division's landscape in the fall of 2022. Though not exhaustive, the feedback we received revealed critical themes that guided our vision:

- Empowering Co-Curricular Opportunities: Supporting students by providing transformative high impact opportunities that foster self-reflection and empowerment, bolstering their success both inside and outside the classroom.
- Inclusive and Collaborative Environment: Establishing an inclusive and collaborative student-centric division that prioritizes the well-being and growth of our staff while offering unwavering support to our students.
- Holistic Well-being: Fostering overall well-being by creating an environment that embraces a holistic developmental approach to managing work, study, and personal life.
- Alignment with Institutional Goals: Ensuring DSA's actions are in sync with the broader institutional plan, outlining our integral role in achieving the institution's overarching goals.

These themes became embedded in the bedrock of our strategic planning process, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to the growth and welfare of our students and staff. Nearly 80% of the division actively participated in this process, driven by our core value of inclusivity. To facilitate this collective effort, we enlisted Donovan Nichols, a distinguished speaker with expertise in work/life balance and former student affairs practitioner, to serve as a facilitator during a series of sessions. His guidance led us through the myriad of voices and ideas that shape our division.

Through extensive feedback loops and collaborative efforts, five core themes emerged from the discussions. These themes were further honed and refined by working groups led by DSA staff, in partnership with students and faculty.

On July 7, 2023, Dr. Holland presented the working groups' results, fostering further reflection and thoughtful consideration. Over the next several weeks, the draft was updated several times to reflect the evolution of thought within the division. Ultimately, this process culminated in the current state that went live on August 14, 2023, for implementation.

Now that the plan has been published, we acknowledge the dynamic nature of our environment, and our plan remains agile and adaptable to accommodate potential shifts in the system and institutional planning processes. This flexibility ensures ongoing support for both our students and staff, as we strive to create an even brighter future for all members of the UH Hilo community.

Philosophical Foundations: Nurturing Transformational Student Growth

Often there is discussion about the silos of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and the key to success is breaking down those silos and working more collaboratively by integrating best practices, notably in high impact areas (orientation, mentoring, service learning, student employment, honors colleges, etc.) to ensure student success. In DSA, our unwavering focus is on nurturing students' holistic development, fostering their academic, social, and personal growth for a successful journey through college and beyond. Our hope is to work collaboratively with the entire campus community, but notably Academic Affairs, to accomplish this. Our profession is based on some fundamental principles and foundational work through collaborations in Student Affairs professional organizations (NASPA, ACPA, NIRSA, NACADA, NODA, and many more) and Academic and Business organizations (ASHE, NACUBO to name a couple. Thus, we base our planning approach on esteemed philosophical frameworks and standards in Student Affairs practice, including:

- "Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs" (ACPA and NASPA, 1996): Our work is guided by the principles of active learning, ethical standards, high expectations, performance improvement, effective resource use, educational partnerships, and inclusive communities.
- "The Student Learning Imperative" (ACPA): Our mission, resource allocation, collaborations, and staff expertise are influenced by this imperative, grounding our policies in research-backed practices and institutional assessment data.
- "Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning": We recognize the immense value of collaboration between academic and student affairs, creating an enriching learning experience through active knowledge construction, developmental growth, social interactions, and educational climates.
- Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education: We adhere to the standards set by CAS, which promote continuous improvement of higher education services and professional programs.
- "Learning Reconsidered" (NASPA and ACPA, 2004): Our approach to transformative education centers on placing students at the core of the learning experience. We prioritize cognitive complexity, knowledge application, humanitarianism, civic engagement, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, practical competence, and persistence. Our collaboration with Academic Affairs promotes student learning and success. Together, we can build high impact practices to help students succeed.

Ultimately, Student Affairs staff are educators who design and implement programs and services that help shape the student experience and their success. This is done by looking at best practices, student development research, and sound assessment. This strategic plan represents that thinking at UH Hilo.

Connecting with UH System and UH Hilo Strategic Plans

As a division within UH Hilo, DSA is fully dedicated to aligning its planning with the broader UH system and UH Hilo campus plans. The UH system's key imperatives, particularly "Fulfill kuleana to Native Hawaiians and Hawaii" and "Develop successful students for a better future," directly influence our divisional plan. We embrace these imperatives through cultural learning with the ka'ao framework and our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, creating an environment that fosters belonging.

UH Hilo's strategic goals - "Strengthen our commitment to haumana: equity and student success," "Strengthen our commitment to 'aina and community-based education," and "Strengthen our commitment to kakou, our campus 'ohana" - are deeply embedded in our planning efforts. Data-driven decisions, addressing equity gaps, promoting collaboration, engaging students through high-impact practices, and supporting our staff are our pillars in achieving these goals.

Both the university system plan and UH Hilo's strategic goals play a central role in our collective thinking, fueling our efforts to create a transformative educational experience for all students as we move forward.

Strengthening Collaboration for Impactful Change

To drive transformative change and achieve our goals, we have established a series of dynamic committees that promote collaboration within our division and across campus to create, implement, and assess our initiatives:

Student Affairs Leadership Council (SALC): Comprising select leaders from DSA units, this council advises the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs on critical matters. Meeting consistently, it addresses policy, processes, and strategic planning. Serving as the chief advisory body to the VCSA, it brings diverse viewpoints to guide decision-making.

- **Social Community Building Committee:** This committee nurtures staff connections, extends a warm welcome to new members, and commemorates accomplishments within the division. Its focus is on cultivating an inclusive and supportive environment that embraces all.
- **Operational Efficiencies:** This committee diligently reviews policies, budgeting processes, and space utilization to recommend efficient and effective changes that positively impact student success.
- **Program Review/Assessment:** Diligently examining policies, budgeting procedures, and space utilization, this committee recommends effective and efficient changes that positively influence student success.
- **VCSA Student Cabinet:** Comprising student leaders, including nominees, this crucial group offers valuable input to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs on matters of significance. Their perspectives aid in shaping student-focused initiatives and enriching the overall campus experience.

Sub-Groups of the Student Success Leadership Team (SSLT):

- **Enrollment:** Guided by a clear vision, this subgroup will create a strategic enrollment management plan. It will meticulously analyze enrollment data from admission to graduation, enhancing our understanding of enrollment management campus-wide.
- **Engagement:** Positioned at the heart of student life, this subcommittee champions engagement throughout the student journey. From the pivotal first year to the world of transfers, it delves into transformative practices like service learning, learning communities, and peer-assisted learning. The objective is to foster an unbreakable sense of belonging aligned with impactful practices that engage students and drive them to persist and graduate.
- **Student Support and Wellbeing:** Rooted in empathy, this subgroup will take charge of our students' fundamental needs. Implementing our Campus Basic Needs plan is merely the initial step. It will establish a comprehensive approach to student care, ensuring that UH Hilo is a haven of well-being and growth. Furthermore, the team will coordinate campus responses to situations affecting our students, both locally and beyond, as required.
- **Workplace Culture:** Empowering our academic community with a culture of unity, respect, and inspiration, this subgroup will foster a workplace environment that promotes collaboration, creativity, and personal development. This isn't solely about professional growth—it's about establishing an environment where everyone thrives. From hiring considerations to onboarding new employees, the aim is to create a culture in which faculty and staff feel valued and supported.

Assessment: Elevating Outcomes Through Data-Driven Excellence

At DSA, our commitment to excellence runs deep. To ensure the continuous improvement of our services and programs, we harness the power of robust assessment methods. Our goal is clear - meeting the diverse needs of our students effectively and empowering their growth. Through meticulous tracking and evaluation in three critical areas, we pave the way for transformative outcomes:

- **Demand Insights:** Understanding the demand for our services is key. We closely monitor participation numbers, gathering vital demographic data for inclusivity. Additionally, we analyze applications, reservations, and overall usage, uncovering valuable insights into student preferences and needs.
- **Quality Driven:** We hold ourselves to the highest standards, consistently evaluating the outcomes of our initiatives. Our data-driven assessments provide a clear understanding of program effectiveness. To ensure objectivity, we engage external stakeholders in the evaluation process, adhering to professional standards and guidelines.
- **Empowered Staff:** Our dedicated staff plays a pivotal role in delivering exceptional services. We champion their growth through professional development opportunities, encouraging participation in conferences, and fostering collaborations with external agencies. Staying informed about best practices and trends in student affairs empowers our staff to excel.

Guided by Programmatic, Learning and Development Outcomes (PLADOs), we nurture holistic student growth. These outcomes encompass critical areas such as critical thinking, humanitarianism, civic engagement, and interpersonal/intrapersonal competence. Aligning our initiatives with these PLADOs, we provide unwavering support to our students' development and well-being.

To uphold our pursuit of excellence, we adhere to the esteemed standards set by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education. These standards underpin every aspect of our division:

- **Mission, Goals, and Objectives:** Our outcomes are clear, measurable, and aligned with our broader goals, guiding our strategic focus.
- **Human Resources:** Recognizing the value of our staff, we ensure they are well-staffed, motivated, and equipped through continuous professional development.
- **Program and Service Delivery:** Our student-centric programs and services address unique challenges, regularly assessed to maximize their impact.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Equity and social justice are paramount. Our programs and services are inclusive, welcoming all students with open arms.
- **Technology:** Leveraging technology enables us to deliver services more effectively, accurately measuring the impact of our initiatives.
- **Financial Resources:** Our budget plans are carefully aligned with our goals, and we closely monitor their utilization to maximize their impact.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Our power lies in collaboration. We forge strategic partnerships with other university departments and external allies to achieve shared goals.

Every functional area within student affairs has tailored standards, ensuring a comprehensive approach to our services.

Transparency and Accountability are at our core. Our annual reports showcase our work within the strategic plan, and regular updates ensure our adaptability and responsiveness to the evolving needs of our dynamic student community.

With data as our compass, we elevate the student experience, leaving no room for mediocrity. At DSA, excellence is not just a goal; it is our way of life.