UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I® HILO

To: Norman Arancon, Director of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resource Management

From: Kris Roney, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Subject: VCAA Feedback on CAFNRMs Program Review

CC: Bonnie Irwin, Chancellor
Seri Luangphinith, Accreditation Liaison Officer

This document is intended for the department's reflection on their review and the subsequent feedback as they prepare the Academic Plan for the next 5-year cycle for review.

The College needs to closely hew to the advice provided by both the External Reviewer and the ALO to improve this area. While the ALO notes that the situation has improved, the breadth of participation and the appearance of taking assessment of student learning seriously remains absent in CAFNRM, even at the time of this writing. The faculty must take responsibility for these processes. Some of what follows may appear to contravene the external reviewer's concerns about morale, however, it should be understood as coming from a place of hope for these programs and a commitment to how essential they are to the island and state economic development, to our students, and to the campus, particularly in leadership around student engagement in hands on learning.

Leading both to and from that that, however, is the need to substantially revise portions of the CAFNRM curriculum, particularly in Horticulture and Aquaculture. Certainly in the first, investments in replacing faculty are critical, and upon the return of the only remaining Horticulturalist, a viable option. That said, curricular modernization is essential, and the new leadership of the college is encouraged to lead the faculty in a process to understand what that can mean. The inclusion of Agribusiness either as a core portion of the degree or a thread throughout the curriculum seems essential at minimum. Should Horticulture/Agronomy be unable to advance a new, modernized vision of itself, it risks the same declines seen in other areas of the CAFNRM degree program.

Aquaculture is a more serious concern, with barely extant enrollments and an internal and systemwide paucity of vision for the discipline. The span of control at Hilo is within the shape of the curriculum and the faculty interaction. The assessments as to the learning that do exist do not seem to be examined closely to operationalize change. In the next two years, should Aquaculture remain unable to revise the curriculum and begin to increase enrollments to the

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point that at least the courses will be large enough to run without small course exceptions being made (or, at minimum in two years, pointing in that direction), the specialty should be considered for suspension and potentially termination. As this is a part of a shared degree ALL CAFNRM faculty should engage in supporting the invigoration of the area and in any systemwide conversations that come to pass. The disciplinary-expert faculty may wish to engage more with the workforce areas of the system strategic plan as one means of examining where to go from here, and certainly should maintain and grow industry connections that permit student opportunities for internships and undergraduate research. This is true of all areas in CAFNRM, but it seems especially ripe for Aquaculture and could lead to the campus faculty having a larger role in visioning within the system. Horticulture may end up in a similar space in years to come absent intentional planning and change.

While the above focuses on one specialty, the faculty of CAFNRM are reminded that theirs is a shared curriculum, so the responsibilities for any given area of the degree in Agriculture belongs to all. The same is true of Aeronautical Sciences. Whatever histories exist, the negative stories need to be set aside for the good of the college and the students. The college faculty must work as a body collective to see this through.

As the dean notes, the CAFNRM faculty can engage more directly in an intentionally interdisciplinary program, given the set up of the Agricultural degree (the same is true of Aeronautical Sciences, but directions of potential partnerships will become more clear in the initial years of assessments). The Director should consider working with the Director for the Center for Community Engagement on pedagogical changes that might help advance such work.

In all cases, the program reviewer provides substantive advice as to how this might be accomplished. An external facilitator should be explored in conjunction with the Vice Chancellor's office as a means of improving professional engagement between the CAFNRM faculty with respect to curriculum, assessment, and student learning. The college has a considerable example of the positive changes that such approaches can take in the Animal Science specialty, which is a growing area for the college.

As Aeronautical Sciences gets off the ground, the College must endeavor to assure that the gaps in assessment that exist elsewhere are not replicated there. However, as with the other facilities within CAFNRM, the faculty need to design and present to the VCAA through the Director a coherent plan for the advancement and improvement of the Pana'ewa farm, PACRC (though the oversight likely should move from CAFNRM to improve the span of disciplines engaged there), and the simulator lab. Absent such a plan, administration is unable to see the vision behind requests and to build a proactive and strategic budget to assure their upkeep and advancement.

CAFNRM can and should be one of the shining stars of UH Hilo, as a College with an excellent faculty, a span of facilities that are completely committed to hands on education in ways students may not receive at other campuses, and a local environment that allows for the

integration of indigenous ways of knowing, international engagements, and an accessible diversity of environments for students to study how the various forms of agriculture and aeronautics change their choices and needs in the future. There are few other campuses in the world with the sorts of opportunities that CAFNRM presents, and the faculty are encouraged to follow the structural change strategies suggested by the reviewer toward positive change. That vision can be shared with Admissions, who can assist with enrollments, and with the community colleges for transfer recruitment. With the coming structural changes in leadership, the faculty have an opportunity to reconsider their engagement with each other and their disciplines for the betterment of the programs and the students.

Mahalo for your work in this substantial and essential effort.

Yours,

Kris Roney

Kris Roney
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs