

July 18, 2024

Dr. Bonnie Irwin
Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Hilo
299 West Kawili Street
Hilo, HI 96720-4091

Dear Chancellor Irwin:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 28, 2024. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Special Visit to University of Hawai'i at Hilo April 10-12, 2024 using the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by University of Hawai'i at Hilo prior to the Special Visit and the institution's May 31, 2024 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Seri Luangphinith, Professor and ALO; Keiki Kawai'ae'a, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Kalei Rapoza, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs; and Chris Holland, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's status with WSCUC.

Actions

1. Receive the Special Visit team report that focused on: (1) unifying strategic plans; (2) improving assessment and program review; and (3) building IR capacity. In addition, the team examined declines in enrollment and budget.
2. Continue a Formal Notice of Concern
3. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2025 to address by February 1, 2025 the requirements that were previously stated in the July 11, 2022 Commission Action Letter: (1) develop one strategic plan agreed upon by key constituents; (2) develop a strategic enrollment management plan; and (3) develop a long-term financial plan that integrates with the enrollment management plan

Commendations

The Commission commends UH Hilo for:

1. Embracing the process of program review, drawing on data and evidence to make informed decisions regarding program improvements.
2. Launching a robust, multi-year cycle of program learning outcomes assessment, employing best practices and using findings to improve curriculum.

Notice of Concern

A Formal Notice of Concern provides notice to the institution that, while it currently meets WSCUC Standards, it is in danger of being found out of compliance with one or more Standards if current trends or findings continue. Institutions issued a Formal Notice of Concern are scheduled for a Special Visit. If the issues are not addressed, a sanction could be imposed as described in the 2103 Handbook of Accreditation. A Formal Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website.

Standards at Risk of Non-Compliance and Requiring a Response

University of Hawai'i at Hilo is in danger of being found out of compliance with Standard 3, CFR 3.4 and Standard 4, CFRs 4.6 and 4.7. UHH has not adopted a Strategic Plan, has not established realistic enrollment targets, and does not have a multi-year financial planning process.

Areas for Development

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following areas for development:

1. **Strategic Plan:** At the time of the previous review, UH Hilo did not have a strategic plan in place, and the 2022 Commission Action Letter required UH Hilo to complete a strategic plan. UH Hilo must develop a single, public Strategic Plan. (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)
2. **Strategic Enrollment Plan:** UH Hilo has experienced multiple years of significant declining enrollment. The previous Commission Action Letter required development of a Strategic Enrollment Plan. No formal enrollment plans have been developed. The institution has not established realistic enrollment targets or an understanding of the characteristics of successful students compared to those who leave. UH Hilo must develop and implement a plan that addresses UHH's enrollment decline through specific actions designed to meet an enrollment target. (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)
3. **Financial Planning:** While recognizing that the University of Hawai'i at Hilo is part of the University of Hawai'i system and must work within the guidelines and processes of that system, there does not seem to be a long-term budgeting process. The university used reserves this year and expects to use reserves next year to cover some core expenses. To ensure greater fiscal sustainability, UH Hilo must improve financial planning by developing a multi-year budget, including any

anticipated use of reserves and considering the impact of declining enrollment.
(CFRs 3.4, 4.6, 4.7)

Further Recommendations

1. Enhance communication among all campus constituents, and especially between the administration and Faculty Senate, relating to university policies, processes, and decision-making. (CFR 1.7, 3.7)
2. Institutionalize a culture of data-informed decision-making and develop Institutional Research capacity. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of University of Hawai'i System Board. A copy of this letter is also being sent to the President of the University of Hawai'i. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that University of Hawai'i at Hilo undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jamiene S. Studley
President

JSS/mbg

Cc: Tracy Poon Tambascia, Commission Chair
Seri Luangphinith, ALO
Gabriel Lee, Board Chair
David Lassner, President, University of Hawai'i
Members of the Accreditation Visit Team
Mark B. Goor, Vice President