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May 23, 2024

WASC Senior College and University Commission
1001 Marina Village Parkway Suite 402
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear Commissioners: On behalf of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, we would first like to thank our WSCUC liaison and the site team who visited us on April 10-12, 2024:

- Mark Goor, WSCUC Liaison
- Judy Sakaki, Chair
- Stephen Schellenberg, Assistant Chair
- Gloria Niles, Member
- Myeshia Armstrong, Member
- Joseph Slowensky, Member

We received their comprehensive report and are grateful for the careful and in-depth analysis offered by the team. We welcome the opportunity to reflect on our strengths and to begin planning for addressing concerns as highlighted by the site team's report. What follows are some brief updates responding to the report.

Correction of Fact

We would like to make a quick clarification (correction) to the site team's report on pages 8-9 as follows, with our apologies for missing this item before the written report was finalized: "The week before the Special Visit, the chancellor **again** asked these leads to develop a timeline for completing the "harmonization" (the word used by the three representatives) of the multiple plans. This timeline was shared orally with the team. No other substantive progress from these efforts were presented in the Special Visit Report or to the team during the Special Visit."

Strategic Planning

The institution further wishes to clarify the current state of strategic planning: Two of the three leads of the campus strategic planning documents to be harmonized took on new duties this year; thus, the campus did not get the task done before the visit. However, the leads established a timeline in early April and, pending the adoption of an interim enrollment target and senior leadership support, are optimistic that they can complete the task by January. This timeline assumes adherence to the Faculty Congress-approved policy on shared governance.

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- Drafting
 - Draft vision done by the end of May 2024
 - Senior leader discussion on the implications and operationalization of the draft vision by end of June 2024
 - Draft reconciled Strategic Plan by July 2024
- Transmit Draft to Campus Strategic Planning Group, Faculty Congress, Hanakahi for consultation
 - Send Draft in July 2024 and resend on First Day of Instruction, August 26, 2024
- Transmit close-to-final Draft to Campus, Colleges, Community
 - Send no later than October 1, 2024 (hopefully sooner). Responses by October 31, 2024.
 - Ask for ideas on implementation, task ideas
 - Focus on the Implementation Plan in October and November
- Faculty Congress Review/Campus Governance Voting
 - November 2024
- Final SP Roll Out: January 1, 2025 (2013, CFR 3.7)

Strategic Enrollment Planning

While addressing enrollment issues wasn't one of the three primary tasks for the special visit, the institution has proactively engaged in several initiatives to enhance Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM). These efforts include:

- **Retention Plans:** Some departments have developed targeted retention plans, and others will be encouraged to do so.
- **Data Analytics Training:** Many faculty and staff have undergone extensive training in data analytics to better understand and address enrollment trends.
- **Admissions Enhancements:** The admissions team has been further resourced and the Division of Student Affairs has engaged various vendors to replace the services previously provided by EAB. (2013, CFR 4.1& 4.6)

Additionally, UH Hilo is excited to announce a partnership with Echo Delta, a firm specializing in SEM. Echo Delta signed the contract during the week of May 13, 2024, with final approval from the University of Hawai'i System Office of Procurement on May 28. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs met with Echo Delta representatives on May 20 to discuss the implementation of the scope of work, which includes:

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1. Conduct a Comprehensive Assessment

- Analyze current enrollment data and trends
- Review existing recruitment and retention strategies
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis)

2. Engage Stakeholders

- Facilitate workshops and focus groups with faculty, staff, students, and alumni
- Gather input and feedback to ensure broad-based support and involvement

3. Develop a Tailored SEM Plan

- Set clear, achievable enrollment targets
- Create strategies for marketing, recruitment, retention, and financial aid
- Integrate academic program planning with enrollment strategies
- Establish metrics for tracking and assessing progress

4. Implementation Support

- Provide guidance on best practices and resources.
- Offer training and support to key staff members.
- Assist in developing a timeline and action plan for implementation.

The institution is aiming to establish interim enrollment targets for both retention and recruitment by Fall 2024. These targets will be refined based on the insights gained from the comprehensive assessment conducted by Echo Delta. (2013, CFR 4.1 & 4.6)

UH Hilo is confident that these efforts will significantly enhance our enrollment management strategies and outcomes.

Budget Development and Reserve Spending

Careful spending during FYs 20-22 along with HEERF supplemental funding allowed UH Hilo to increase our Tuition and Fees Special Fund (TFSF) reserve to a level that permits us to make larger investments back into campus. In FY 2024 UH Hilo used approximately \$7.3 million from TFSF reserves, \$3 million of which was utilized to address campus budget shortfalls. The \$3 million is approximately 4.1% of the overall general fund and TFSF budget for FY 24. The remaining use of TFSF reserves was one-time spending to seed new initiatives, investment in



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programs, and address deferred maintenance. The campus realizes that use of reserves is not a long-term solution to budget shortfalls, but a means of bridging the gap until such a time as the strategic enrollment plan is in place. (2013, CFR 3.4)

Engaging all stakeholders in the budgeting process builds transparency, communication and accountability regarding the campus' investment of our resources. The call to campus for budget ideas is not solely about use of reserves, but also adjustment of operating budget and building of legislative requests for the upcoming biennium budget. Presentations on the budget information gathering process to campus leadership and Faculty Congress laid out a timeline and decision-making process involving all levels of campus. Final decisions for proposal prioritization and funding are made by the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor team, with the ultimate campus approval by the Chancellor. Feedback loops are included after each step in the process, and will be more clearly stated in future communications. In the future, we will work with the campus to identify additional criteria to refine proposals and clarify the evaluation process, and we will adhere to the Faculty Congress-approved policy on shared governance. (2013, CFR 3.7 & 4.6)

Each UH campus prepares a Multi-Year Financial Forecast that is presented at the System level annually to the UH Board of Regents. UH Hilo prepares a six-year forecast in conjunction with the other campuses. The last forecast was presented to the Board of Regents in September 2023 for FYs 2024-2029, and we will present the updated six-year forecast in September 2024.

Institutional Research

As we had mentioned to members of the site team, we had deployed a leaver/stayer survey ($n = 74$) of which we can report actionable items. Finances, the desire to spend time with family, and "simply needing a break between semesters" were overwhelmingly noted as reasons for not registering. The six students who said they did not plan to return cited course availability, scheduling conflicts and lack of majors to match their educational goals as primary reasons they planned to leave. Not receiving adequate support (academic and personal) was also cited as a contributing factor.

However, the majority of students indicated they were generally satisfied with services and interactions at UH Hilo, particularly library services, sense of safety, availability of technology, class size, relationships with faculty and peers, teaching styles of faculty, first year experience, and the interdisciplinary course "Kuleana and Community."

These findings indicate areas where UH Hilo is doing well for some students, but not for all. There are some factors that are beyond the control of the institution (e.g. challenges with

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FAFSA that impact financial aid certainty). Likewise, student concerns raised in this survey will be more fully researched to assess impact on the broader student population. (2013, CFR 4.1)

As noted in the summary report, this “quick survey” was a product of UH Hilo’s third CSU Data Analytics Cohort (Student Success Initiative). Faculty Congress has expressed interest in working with the UHH IRO to conduct a deeper dive into student retention and persistence. To respond to their request for IRO to initiate this effort, a UH Hilo team, currently led by the Interim Director, is collaborating with AASCU under the Student Success Equity Initiative (SSEI) to conduct a landscape analysis mapping out the student experience at UH Hilo. Faculty Congress and Staff Council have been identified as key stakeholder groups whose participation, input and insights will be essential to a thorough review. UH Hilo will be left with a roadmap and recommendations to meet student needs. (2013, CFR 3.7 & 4.2)

To respond to additional comments from WSCUC regarding the expansion of a data informed culture, as well as the need to conduct more frequent climate assessment, IRO, again in partnership with AASCU, will conduct a campus climate survey that will be disseminated to students and employees. The survey will focus on issues of campus and community belonging. Findings will be used to develop strategic priorities moving forward, with a focus on specific areas to target for improvement as well as recommendations for how to hold leadership across campuses accountable for making relevant change through strategic goal setting. (2013, CFR 4.1)

Finally, the Interim Director of IRO continues to participate in mentoring and professional development, including AIR, AASCU’s SSEI, National Center for Education Statistics, and is also encouraging ongoing development for the IRO Data Analyst. The Interim Director and Analyst are conducting ongoing training in use of UHH dashboards, and will continue to work to improve not only access to data, but to also enhance understanding in order to implement best practices. (2013, CFR 4.2)

Communication

Uh Hilo acknowledges that communication can be improved, and various means of communicating information in addition to emails and newsletter have been implemented. The campus fora that were initiated during the pandemic have continued most months. At these events, the chancellor and vice chancellors make themselves available to answer any questions the attendees might have. Typically, the campus alternates modality between face-to-face and Zoom for these events. While the administration acknowledges that attendance is often better in the Zoom sessions, the face-to-face sessions are meant to communicate the importance of in-person convenings to the vibrant life of the campus. In addition, the chancellor reviewed

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enrollment, budget, and university highlights in a State of the University Address in March 2024. The event was held in person, community members and government officials were present, and the text of the address was shared with the campus and public. The County Council subsequently asked for a similar presentation, which was delivered publicly in April 2024.

In the 2023-24 academic year, administrators highlighted certain topics of campus-wide concern during the forum events: the admissions cycle and process, budget development and consultation, and legislative relations. In each of these cases, a deeper dive into process was followed by Q&A. Each of these presentations was also given to the Chancellor's Executive Committee for discussion by mid-level administrators so that expectations for their involvement in admissions, budget development, and legislative relations could be set. (2013, CFR 3.7)

In addition, the chancellor and vice chancellors, all *ex officio* members of the Faculty Congress, attend those meetings as their schedules allow, and are available to answer questions from the membership. Regarding budget in particular, the Vice Chancellor for Administration met with the Congress Budget Committee in October 2023 and January 2024 to review the current year budget and the use of the reserves. The interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs also met with the Congress Budget Committee to discuss the Academic Affairs budget in greater detail. The chancellor and interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs meet with the Faculty Congress officers monthly and have recently started inviting the other vice chancellors as well. Nevertheless, we recognize that attending meetings and being available to answer questions does not constitute shared governance. We appreciate the site team's commendation regarding the Faculty Congress-approved shared governance policy, and we will adhere to it whenever possible. (2013, CFR 3.7 & 4.6)

A Staff Council was inaugurated in Fall 2022. Chancellor and vice chancellors are also available to that group when requested. (2013, CFR 4.3 & 4.6)

Final Comments

This response captures the work that the institution is conducting on ongoing areas of concern. We appreciate the insights of the site team and look forward to answering questions posed by the Commission.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Irwin, Chancellor
Seri I. Luangphinit, Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

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Additional narrative provided by:

Keiki Kawaia'e'a, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Kalei Rapoza, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs
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Jennifer Stotter, Interim Director of Institutional Research
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