Student Life and Events Complex moving closer to reality

by John Burnett

Part of the vision UH President Evan Dobelle has for the UH Hilo campus is to make Hilo a “college town,” a concept that’s been bandied about for a long time now, but with few specifics from those who would have the municipal metamorphosis happen. Dobelle has been industriously painting details into what had previously been a rather general, perhaps even generic picture.

Perhaps the centerpiece of his plan to bring together town and gown is a 6,000-seat multipurpose sports and recreational complex, which has gotten a lot of attention in the media lately.

As with most of the President’s vision of UH’s future, it has received the blessing of Governor Ben Cayetano. Such a facility would come with a very stiff price tag - about $88 million at last count and rising. Lawmakers, torn between the desire to provide an economic stimulus to pull the State out of its fiscal doldrums and the stark reality of an uncertain future in the wake of September 11, decided not to act on providing construction funding during the recent special session of the state legislature.

UH Hilo Director of University Relations Gerald DeMello, who is co-chair with Dr. John Whittaker of a committee studying the ramifications of such a facility, says that both the President and Governor are committed to making the project happen, and the question of funding will come up during the next legislative session.

“The goal of UH Hilo’s Strategic Plan is to establish UH Hilo as the primary residential undergraduate campus in the system,” DeMello said. “An integral part of that idea is that Hilo could potentially become a college town, which could support the campus. So the manifestation of that direction calls for a multipurpose complex because it has educational, economic and cultural benefits to the University, the Hilo community and the island of Hawai‘i.

“The driver of this complex, which is officially known as the Student Life and Events Complex, is an events center or a conference center. Of course, there will be venues for athletics, fitness and student recreation.

Spotlight

UH Hilo registrar graduates to retirement

by John Burnett

Patrick Omori is generally a man of action, not of words. Quiet and unassuming, he is clearly uncomfortable talking about himself, but he is capable of opening up when talking about his long tenure as registrar at UH Hilo. It will be the end of an era at year’s end, as Omori is retiring after 31 years in the University of Hawai‘i system, of which 28 was spent at UH Hilo. His last working day is December 28.

“When I was hired in here in 1973, one of my tasks was to merge the Hawai‘i Community College and Hilo College together and do one registration for what they called the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo,” Omori said. “Then in 1991, the Board of Regents approved the split (of UH Hilo and HawCC). So in Spring 1992, that was the last combined registration we had with Hawai‘i Community College. So there was a lot of big changes over the years where we merged and then divorced.

“Now, there is talk that the two schools will be reunited again under President Dobelle,” Omori noted with an ironic chuckle.

Omori is a 1961 graduate of Hilo High School who went into the U.S. Army Signal Corps for a
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It will have the kind of activities that will be able to generate at least 50 percent of the operating costs. So we’re going to be able to come up with at least half of the costs of administration, maintenance and basic operations, simple things like keeping the lights on. We’re going to try to come up with more, but we’re officially looking at 50 percent.

“We can do a lot of programs with disciplines such as marine science, astronomy, volcanology, agriculture - a lot of educational conferencing that would have a national and international appeal,” DeMello added. “The facility would be planned with an eye on accommodating conferences with a maximum size of about 3,000. But we’re looking to bring in about 24,000 people throughout the year that would come here for conferencing. “If we are able to attract 20,000 to 24,000 people to Hilo each year for various conferences, then we can generate enough revenue to pay for this facility,” he explained. “In addition, the economic spin-off into the community and into the State would be tremendous. For example, after the conservation biology conference that brought in 1,200 people, I received anecdotal feedback from local merchants such as Basically Books downtown and The Most Irresistible Shop that for them, it was like Christmas in August.”

Bringing conference participants with their dollars to Hilo is not the only potential benefit the complex would have for both town and gown.

“The facility would also be able to accommodate commencements and other sorts of social gatherings,” DeMello said. “Then, there’s the obvious, the sports-recreational venue. We’d develop the facility for multi-use sports, with basketball, volleyball, hopefully an indoor track. There would be fitness and weight rooms, a high-performance laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment for aerobic and anaerobic fitness testing, weight management and nutritional research, testing and counseling. The laboratory could also do research on the ramifications of ethnicity and cultural practices on health and wellness and myriad experiments in terms of lifestyle education to help people live longer and healthier lives.

“With our multicultural demographics and Hawai’i having the longest life expectancy of all the states in the Union, it just makes sense to have this kind of program tied in with sports and recreation,” he said.

In addition to the upgrading of the University’s Health and Physical Education Department that such labs would facilitate, both intramural and intercollegiate athletics at UH Hilo would perhaps be able to expand with such a facility on campus.

“Another facility within the complex is a 50-meter indoor pool,” DeMello said. “That becomes important for student life and the general health and well-being of students. It could also tie into the University as another sort of activity for students, certainly as an intramural activity and perhaps an intercollegiate swim team as well.

“It could also house the City Bank-UH Hilo Athletic Hall of Fame. We already have the Hall of Fame in the Athletics Department complex, but it’s rather small. But it could be expanded and there could be museum displays that could reflect our athletic history here and give both students and people in the community a sense of place and a sense of pride.

“The complex would have a high-tech, state-of-the-art infrastructure, all the whistles and bells, such as a media facility and a satellite uplink so we can properly accommodate events that need televising,” he added.

“We would love to accommodate community events such as the Merrie Monarch Festival and the Tahiti Fete, but that would be their choice. It would be great for this island to have a large enough facility that it could do major athletic events, trade shows, concerts, cultural activities such as Merrie Monarch and Tahiti Fete. We would welcome the opportunity to accommodate those kinds of activities and events, which in turn, would help with our capacity to contain revenue.”

Placement of such a complex would be at the mauka end of the campus as part of the current Athletic Department complex.

“The site would be in the general area of the tennis courts,” DeMello said. “The tennis courts would be relocated to another part of campus. So you could come into the Athletic Department parking lot as you currently do, and you would have the complex directly in front of you stretching back to the general incline of the baseball field. It would be linked, in part, to the existing gym and the weight room. The pool would be away from the facility.

“I don’t know if we would have to relocate the softball field or not, but if in fact we do, we would have enough money in the appropriation so we could move it to another part of campus and we could do it right. We could install lights and do something that would be fitting for their sports program.”

Further construction at that end of the campus brings up an obvious question: parking.

“We would look at the cost of multilevel parking,” DeMello explained. “We may have to start with ground parking. The Puainako extension from Komohana to Kawili Street and all the way down to Kilauea would fold into Kanoeluhua by the intersection going into Prince Kuhio Plaza and would become an important part of this project. We could have another road coming into the back portion behind ASH and link into the area where we would have parking, which is that large open space between ASH and the existing parking lot. We may look at some parking behind the existing gym in the grassy area there as well.

There is little question that a major multipurpose sports and recreational complex in this busy part of the community would have an effect on traffic, travel time, flood channels, and other environmental and quality of life concerns.

“Don’t know if there would have to be an Environmental Impact Statement,” DeMello said. “Perhaps an environmental assessment. Usually when you build a new building on
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campus you don’t have to do that. But with this project, there are questions of traffic flow and parking, which are two huge issues. Or perhaps a major traffic study, which the $200,000 we have for planning will be looking at.”

Group 70 International, Inc. of Honolulu, which has been contracted for the planning of the Student Life and Events Complex, has already completed a $100,000 feasibility study of the project, which has produced a document almost the size of a Big Island telephone directory. $200,000 has been released for the planning stage, which includes site selection and traffic flow analysis. The next phase will be another $200,000 for schematic diagrams and model renderings of the complex design itself.

“The $200,000 is not going to be enough to complete the design, but it’s a good starting point,” said UH Hilo Facilities Planner Lo-li Chih.

“The design will be such that it will start at 6,000 seats and eventually be expanded to 10,000 seats. We’re trying to make this complex as flexible as possible. It will be a rectangular design with segments that can be moved when expansion becomes necessary. There will be bleachers that are divided into different levels. The bleachers can be contracted into a smaller space when they are not being used so there is more floor space for activities.”

Facilities with flexible seating configurations currently being looked at as possible models include Yale University’s Coxe Cage Field House, the University of Southern Maine Field House, the University of Southern Florida Sun Dome Arena and the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham, England, the United Kingdom’s premier sports arena. Arena-field house hybrids that are possible models include the event facilities at Western Michigan University and at Murray State University in Kentucky.

“I think, with a project like this, we probably have to use our Development office to get endowment for this facility, as well,” DeMello said. “Maybe something like the pool or the fitness room could be a nice piece that we could try to get private sector endowment or support for. Perhaps certain facilities within the complex could have a corporate name or a family name attached to them.

“Now that we have the feasibility study done, now that we have site selection done, these kinds of issues will be tackled by the planning committee.

“I would like to see us done with planning by late February.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE: John Burnett is a public information officer.)

University of Hawai‘i at Hilo: A College in the Making now available

The first 46 years of the history of UH Hilo is currently documented in a publication written by both Frank T. Inouye, director, UH Hilo, 1952-1957, and former Chancellor Dr. Ed Kormondy, 1986-1993. The book, The University of Hawai‘i at Hilo: A College in the Making, is a must read for anyone interested in the evolution of this institution.

Rather than a historical documentary, the book is a compilation of the writings of Inouye and the reflections of former chancellors of UH Hilo, culminating with Kormondy’s chapter, “UH Hilo: Challenges and Opportunities,” and his epilogue.

The book also includes chronological highlights, listings of all former academic and administrative leaders and a list of donors.

Because Inouye passed away quite suddenly in 1996 before the manuscript was completed, the proceeds from book sales ($15 per copy) will go into the Frank T. Inouye Scholarship Fund at UH Hilo. Publication costs have been covered in advance by private donations.

The book can be purchased at Borders, Basically Books, and The Book Gallery in Hilo. If anyone experiences difficulty in obtaining a copy, please contact Paula Thomas, interim director of development, at paulat@hawaii.edu or call x33112.
Dynamic teacher-researchers inspire students

by Dr. April Komenaka

Dr. Ron Amundson, professor of philosophy, Dr. Michael West, associate professor of astronomy, and Dr. Michael Bitter, assistant professor of history, combine vigorous research schedules with equally vigorous teaching programs — all to the benefit of their students.

Ron's specialties are epistemology (theory of knowledge) and the philosophy of the natural and social sciences. A well-established scholar, Ron won the UH system award for Excellence in Research 10 years ago.

Michael West studies galaxies, galaxy clusters, and the large-scale structure of the universe, using some of the world's major telescopes and collaborating with astronomers at Princeton, Yale, and Harvard. Since coming to UH Hilo in 1999, he has been recipient or co-recipient of $800,000 in grants from the NSF, NASA, and the Hubble Space Telescope.

Michael Bitter's specialties are eighteenth century Russian and German history. His current research examines Anglo-Russian relations during the reign of the Tsarina Anna Ioannovna, from 1730 to 1740.

Despite the diversity of these fields of study, the three share some strikingly similar views about classroom teaching. All consider teaching an active art, one that requires a teacher’s full intellectual creativity and passion for learning. In the process, each finds teaching to be a constant challenge and source of delight.

How does one help students to work their way through the complexities of a moral, scientific, or philosophical issue?

"A real appreciation for the beauty and strength of a piece of reasoning can’t be conveyed by simply laying out an argument on the blackboard," Ron asserts. "Careful preparation, motivation, and nurturing are needed. The class has to be prepared and motivated so that the eventual outcome of the argument means something to them — as if it’s a little drama that they’re following."

Michael West believes that a teacher has to "begin by remembering how to think like a student, someone who may know nothing about the subject, by remembering what’s hard and what was tricky about things that are now completely familiar to you.

"This is what I love about teaching: I constantly have to rethink, to find new ways of getting ideas across, to look for better analogies, more surprising ways to link principles to everyday life," Michael West explains.

In his own search for ways to engage students, Michael Bitter has found that they respond enthusiastically to the study of history in terms of themes.

"Ecological imperialism, for example, refers to the impact of European colonization on indigenous plants, animals, and natural resources in regions which have climates and environments similar to those at home," Michael Bitter says. "We are drawing on geology and biology as well as on human-centered sciences like archeology, political science, and linguistics.

"The thematic approach has forced me to think about history in new ways and to ask more provocative questions — of myself as well as of my students."

Each is very clear about his teaching objectives and constantly experiments and refines teaching strategies, hoping to draw closer to those objectives.

Ron's first aim is to "give students the conceptual skills and clarity of expression that a sound philosophical education can offer. The second is to do this in a way that is attractive and accessible to students who have no particular interest in the history of philosophy."

Michael West wants students to understand and to be as excited about astronomy as he is.

"I can’t understand why everyone isn’t an astronomer!" he says. "When you’re passionate about what you do, then your enthusiasm gets your students interested and excited too."

Michael Bitter wants to give students "the background to reason soundly about historical events and processes." He uses political cartoons, maps, art work, architecture, video-taped interviews—even some artifacts, like gems and a sword—to make history more tangible and memorable for his students. He received an Education Improvement Fund grant last year to begin a graphics/media collection for the History Department.

All three expect students to work and think hard outside the classroom as well. In addition to reading assignments, both Michaels send students home with frequent homework assignments, to work out answers to interesting questions or solutions to mathematical problems.

Ron's students read and work on primary sources. "I almost never use secondary sources that are written for college classes," he says. "This makes the reading more difficult, but also makes the topics become much more real-world and immediate, and it gives students the challenge of working on the same problems as their professors — the professionals — are working on."

(Editor’s note: Dr. April Komenaka is co-chair of the UH Hilo Self Study Steering Committee.)
Retired professor donates gifts to the Library

by Thora Abarca

Almost everyone who enters the UH Hilo Library notices the large photograph that hangs above the color copier near the Circulation Desk. Eyes rest on this lovely image while waiting in line to check out books, admiring the graceful palm trees that remind us we live in a tropical island paradise. The photographer who captured this scene from Puuhonua o Honaunau is UH Hilo’s talented Dr. Jim Kelly, who donated this piece to the Library last spring.

Kelly, who recently retired as professor of geography, generously donated 10 more beautiful photographs of local scenery and plant life to the Library during the summer. He framed them, hung them gallery-style on the Library’s lower level walls, creating a better environment for study and contemplation.

“We wanted to give the students a spacious area with comfortable chairs, access to library resources and room to spread out their work, read, think, or relax,” said Thora Abarca, librarian of public services. “Dr. Kelly’s photographs add color, beauty and a sense of place. Focusing on class assignments is sometimes easier if you can let your mind wander momentarily down a trail that disappears mysteriously into the woods or visualize a stand of vibrant gold-colored bamboo.”

Kelly, who started taking outdoor photographs as a hobby a few years ago, enjoys the connection with art and nature and notes that “photography is about creating a little mystery—an image may mean something different to each viewer.”

With his tripod and camera in his backpack, he prefers to hike to a place alone and search for just the right composition. He may not find it the first time he visits a spot, but maybe the second, or third time.

Kelly has won awards for his photography for the last three years, at the fall and spring Big Island Art Shows. Now that he is retired, he plans to continue looking for images that he wants to capture and explore different ways to frame his work.

“Dr. Kelly has always been a part of the Library,” Abarca said. “As a geography professor, he integrated library research into his coursework and encouraged his students to use the Library for information. It seems very appropriate that, through his artistic creations, he will continue to inspire Library users to explore the world and appreciate its beauty.”

(Editor’s note: Thora Abarca is a Librarian, Public Services.)

Permanent collection of UH Hilo currently on display

An exhibition featuring prints and drawings by artists and alumni of the UH Hilo Art Program is currently on view in the Art Department Gallery, Building 395, Manono Campus, until May 2002.

The artists in the exhibition include Timothea Campbell of Berkeley, California from the 1985 Pacific States Print and Drawing Exhibition and Mark Pelnar of Forest Park, Illinois from the 1991 National Drawing Exhibition. Campbell received a juror’s award and purchase award for a drawing, “Halloween in Downieville I,” in oil crayon. Pelnar received a purchase award for a charcoal drawing, titled “The Obliterated Pumpkin.”


Churchill is represented by a group of three large intaglio prints with mixed media and a large mixed media painting on canvas. Churchill is currently enrolled in the graduate program at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Ilas has two works on paper: a graphite drawing and India ink mixed media drawing, completed in 1990. He lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

Johnson’s work is an untitled brush and ink drawing completed in 1988 when she was enrolled in the beginning drawing foundation studio. She lives and teaches in Honolulu.

Greenwood is represented by two figure drawings, completed in 1987, which uses black and white latex enamels, pencil, and crayon. She resides in Pahoa, Hawai‘i.

The Art Department Gallery is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00pm.

For additional information, please call x47524.


Hats off to...

Judith Fox-Goldstein, Director, Conference Center, received two grants from the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority. The first, for $100,000, will provide for the expansion and further development of short-term Edu-Tourism and travel programs. Emphasis will be on extending UH Hilo’s international reach and capturing a greater percentage of the student travel market. The second grant, for $75,000, was awarded in partnership with the Hawai‘i Island Economic Development Board to “Develop a Climate for Conferencing.”

Wayne Miyamoto, Professor of Art, is participating in Prints, USA, 2001, which is presented at the Springfield Art Museum in Springfield, MO through January 6, 2002. Additionally, Miyamoto received a grant from the Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts to fund the organization and preparation of the 2002 Pacific States Biennial National Exhibition in the Campus Center Gallery.

Christian Weisser, Assistant Professor of English, completed final revisions to his book, Moving Beyond Academic Discourse: Composition Studies and the Public Sphere, which will be published with Southern Illinois University Press in March 2002. The book theorizes the recent move within English studies toward public writing, rhetoric, and service learning. Moreover, Weisser was invited to serve as Review Editor of the journal Composition Forum, a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal.

Terrance Jalbert, Assistant Professor of Finance, presented two papers at the International Business and Economics Research Conference. “Double Taxation versus Pass-Through Taxation: An Empirical Study” and “Chief Executive Officer Education, Compensation and Firm Performance” were published in the conference proceedings. Jalbert also presented his work on CEO education at the Trans Pacific Conference on Business and Economics.

Tanya Fusco Johnson, Director, Senior Programs, was awarded $25,000 from the Lowes Home Safety Foundation for home repair materials and assistive devices for Home Safety Monitoring participants.

Paul Dixon, Professor of Psychology, is chairing and presenting a paper at the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, IUAES, Commission on the Anthropology of Mathematics, to be held in Tokyo in September 2002.

Yoshiko Okuyama, Temporary Assistant Professor of Japanese, received intensive training on oral proficiency tests both at San Diego State University and at Middlebury College. Oral proficiency interviews are a standardized, criterion-referenced assessment developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and Okuyama will present ACTFL testing techniques at a UH Hilo Humanities seminar on December 13.

Karla McDermid, Associate Professor of Marine Science, and Sharon Ziegler-Chong, UH Sea Grant Extension Service, received full funding from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for their project, “Atolls and Oceans — An Ecosystem Learning Experience” as part of the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions. The objective is to expose Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander undergraduates to the unparalleled natural resources of atoll ecosystems, as well as the choices people must make to sustain such resources. Students will travel to Midway Atoll next summer.
Michael Bitter, Assistant Professor of History, had his paper “St. Petersburg during the Reign of Anna Ioannova: A Rare Map of the City and its Environs in 1734” accepted for presentation at the International Conference on St. Petersburg (1703-1825), to be held in Cambridge, England in August 2002.

Susan I. Jarvi, Assistant Professor of Biology, published two papers in which molecular genetics techniques are used to address conservation issues relating to Hawai’i’s native avifauna: “Application of a PCR-based approach to identify sex in Hawaiian honeycreepers (Drepanidinae),” Pacific Conservation Biology, vol 6, no. 1, (Jarvi and PC Banko) and “PCR Diagnostics underestimate the prevalence of avian malaria (Plasmodium relictum) in Hawaiian forest birds,” Journal of Parasitology, April 2002, (Jarvi, JJ Schultz and CT Atkinson).

David Sing, Director, Na Pua No’eau, was recently elected to a three-year term on the board of directors of the National Indian Education Association. Sing is the first native Hawaiian to earn a seat on the 12-member board. NIEA is a non-partisan, non-profit organization incorporated in 1970 to monitor and impact federal Indian education policy and legislation.

Michael Marshall, Associate Professor of Art, was one of 10 invited guests to participate in last month’s All Hawai’i Juried Art Exhibition. He exhibited two recent drawings from a series entitled “Verite - Summer, 2001.” The show was held at the East Hawai’i Cultural Center.

Thom Curtis, Assistant Professor of Sociology, conducted a two-day American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Workshop at the Hawai’i State Hospital on O’ahu in October. Twenty-two mental health professionals from O’ahu, Kaua’i, and the Big Island attended the training session sponsored by the State of Hawai’i Department of Health. Participants learned how to plan and implement mental health interventions following natural disasters and other catastrophes, including airplane crashes and terrorism attacks.

Wish to make a contribution to UH Hilo? Use payroll deduction!

A number of faculty and staff have inquired about how to make a charitable donation to UH Hilo via payroll deduction. Believe it or not, you only need to fill out a payroll deduction form, which is short and comes with very simple instructions. The hard part is deciding how much you may want to contribute per month and for how long, and where you want the funds to go.

Charitable contributions can be designated to any department, program or fund. If a fund does not currently exist, one can easily be created. You may make contributions at any level for any length of time, from one month on. And of course, all gifts are tax deductible.

To obtain a form for payroll deduction contributions, or for information about other forms of gifts to UH Hilo, please contact Paula Thomas, interim director of development, at paulat@hawaii.edu, or phone x33112.
UH Hilo scores well on nationwide measure of educational quality

Data assessed by the National Survey of Student Achievement (NSSE) indicate that seniors attending UH Hilo are getting a better than average post-secondary education when compared to seniors at other institutions of higher learning across the United States. Seniors at UH Hilo scored above the national norm in all benchmark categories assessed recently by the NSSE.

“The NSSE,” said Dr. Lynne Stamoulis, UH Hilo director of institutional research, “is making inroads on such national rating systems such as that done by the U.S. News and World Report because it focuses on best practices in higher education as a proxy for educational quality.

“U.S. News and World Report,” she added, “does not quantify educational quality nor use it as a variable in its rating system. The NSSE questions college freshmen and seniors about their experiences at the institution as well as their study practices, backgrounds, and aspirations. The benchmark categories include levels of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interactions with faculty members, enriched educational experiences, and the supportiveness of the campus environment.”

Seniors and freshmen alike scored above the national norm for enriching educational experiences, an area which UH Hilo faculty and administration feel is one of UH Hilo’s special strengths, said Stamoulis. Such experiences include student hands-on involvement with faculty research, service learning, use of technology and interaction in UH Hilo’s rich multicultural community.

In overall student interactions with faculty members, the UH Hilo senior benchmark score was 46.8, versus the national score of 42.9. Over a third of seniors, 34.6 percent, reported working with faculty on research projects, compared with 30 percent at peer institutions and 23.3 percent nationally. Not surprisingly, freshmen scores were lower, reflecting the positive gains of the college experience.

“For overall level of academic challenge, UH Hilo’s senior benchmark score was 57.0, peer group 60.0, and national norm 56.6,” Stamoulis reported. “And as might be expected on the most ethnically diverse campus in the nation, in all items involving positive interaction with people of other racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, UH Hilo freshmen and seniors scores far exceeded both peer and national norms.”

In providing a supportive campus environment, the University scored well for freshmen and even better for seniors, surpassing its peer institutions and the national average. Students give high ratings to UH Hilo’s student support services, student-oriented administrative offices, and small classes with high faculty/student interaction.

“The NSSE, which focuses on best teaching practices in higher education, also point faculty toward areas in which teaching can be improved,” said Dr. April Komenaka, chair of the UH Hilo English Department and co-director of the UH Hilo accreditation efforts. Although UH Hilo seniors scored at the national norm in this cluster of survey items, freshmen did not.

“Survey results suggest that faculty might want to increase the number and difficulty of reading and writing assignments and the level of critical thought required in lower-division courses,” said Komenaka.

Not satisfied with being “at the norm,” UH Hilo faculty are discussing higher levels of expectations for students and means of providing support to ensure that students achieve these levels, explained Komenaka.

The NSSE findings also reinforce the University’s ongoing efforts in assessment of student learning, review and improvement of teaching and curriculum, and student involvement in faculty research.

“For example, efforts to establish capstone experiences (senior seminar, thesis, internship) in more programs will be energized by the finding that only 50 percent of UH Hilo seniors have such experiences, versus 72.7 percent of those at peer institutions and 56.1 percent nationally,” Komenaka said.

The NSSE 2001 was administered to 177,103 freshmen and senior undergraduate students by 327 institutions across the nation. Participating institutions included public and private, large and small liberal arts colleges and major research institutions.

The survey report compares each institution with two groups: those in the same Carnegie Classification and all universities participating in the survey. UH Hilo is classified with both public and private baccalaureate liberal arts institutions, including Vassar and Harvey Mudd and other highly selective schools.

UH Hilo will participate in the NSSE 2002 administration during Spring 2002.

2002-03 Catalog reminder

Faculty and staff are reminded that galleys for the 2002-03 UH Hilo Catalog are due to Alyson Kakugawa-Leong no later than Friday, February 22, 2002. Galleys are currently with the respective deans and directors for revisions.

Catalogs are scheduled to arrive in early July 2002.

Questions may be directed to Kakugawa-Leong at x47642 or email alyson@hawaii.edu.
Christmas for construction at UH Hilo

by John Burnett

When the special legislative session called by Governor Ben Cayetano to deal with the economic downturn wrapped up its work, the state’s chief executive said that cautious lawmakers “hit a single,” although they had a chance to hit a home run.

Despite that critical assessment, lawmakers stuffed the Christmas stockings at UH Hilo with money to start several capital improvement projects and a cornucopia of repairs and renovations, many on the books for three years from now. The funding appropriated and the mandate provided to accelerate these projects means there will be a lot of hammering, sawing and concrete mixing, and the resulting barricades and detours on campus until these projects are completed.

UH Hilo Facilities Planner Lo-li Chih is under the gun to get these projects underway post haste.

“With some special funding we’re getting that the governor has requested to stimulate the economy and the accumulation of three years of Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs), we are asked to get everything started in six months,” Chih said. “My understanding is that the entire University system is to get $17 million from the special legislative session for capital improvements, repairs and renovations, and that UH Hilo is to get $2.5 million.

“We need to get the construction on all these projects started within six months to help to stimulate the economy to come back from economic bad times.”

That $2.5 million is on top of the yearly appropriations for fixing up the campus.

“Every year we receive about $1.5 million for repairs and renovations,” Chih said. “In addition, there are CIPs that used to be handled by the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS). Now, the University is taking over most of those projects and so, with the CIPs, there are three years before the funding lapses.”

Some of the many projects include the construction of new facilities such as the Pacific Aquaculture and Coastal Resources Center and the Mauna Kea Astronomy Education Center. But most fall under the category of repair and renovations.

“At Wentworth Hall, there are two or three projects to do major renovations,” Chih said. “There are a lot of handicap-access improvement projects on campus to make sure that we comply with the (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards, with campuswide ramps and walkways. There are also a lot of re-roofing projects, too. Most of the re-roofing is planned projects — preventive maintenance instead of repairs.”

The Athletic Complex, which was hit especially hard by the flooding of November 1 and 2, 2000, will also be the beneficiary of the legislators’ largesse.

“The New Gym, Athletic area and baseball field will have a lot of projects to improve their area: bleachers; flooring; the classroom area and a new fire alarm system. The baseball field needs major repairs to the field and to the press box.”

There will also be a new outdoor gathering place for students to complement the Library Lanai.

“Between the Campus Center and the new classroom-office building, we will be putting in a new covered plaza for student activities,” Chih explained.

And Santa Claus (or is that Senate Clause?) is also in the process of fulfilling some long held wishes of students on-campus housing.

“At student housing, we’ll install telephones, cable TV and computer access for the rooms and the lounge areas,” Chih said. “The cable TV and phone jacks will go into every room. The computer access, I believe, will just go to the study rooms.”

Chih could probably use some kokua from Santa’s elves, who are used to delivering worldwide overnight, to get what could be a logistical nightmare under control.

“There’s a lot of pressure on our side right now and for some of the projects, we don’t have a contractors to do the work yet, so I’m working on getting contractors and consultants to make commitments that we will see labor in a short time,” he said. “We have to work quickly with the academic programs and students in the housing design review committee for them to provide information so the consultants can design the repairs.”

While the work goes on making UH Hilo a better place to be, Chih appreciates everyone’s cooperation and understanding.

“I do want to apologize for the disruptions that are going to happen because of the quantity of work that should be starting soon,” he said. “But I hope that everyone understands that we want to get things done to improve the quality of education, the quality of work and the quality of life on this campus, and after all is done, hopefully that will be accomplished.”

Think how long Chih’s apology may have been had the legislature, to paraphrase the Governor, had hit the metaphoric ball out of the park.
Kamehameha Schools trustee to address fall commencement

by Ken Hupp

Retired Admiral Robert K.U. Kihune, chair of the board of trustees of Kamehameha Schools, will be the keynote speaker at this year’s Fall Commencement ceremony, scheduled for Saturday, December 22 at 9:00 a.m. in the UH Hilo New Gym. A total of 174 students representing the College of Arts and Sciences (161), College of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource Management (9), and Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke’elikolani College of Hawaiian Language (4) are candidates for various degrees and/or certificates.

Kihune, a 1955 graduate of Kamehameha Schools, attended the U.S. Naval Academy where he earned a B.S. in marine engineering in 1959. He continued his studies at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California where he obtained a B.S. in electrical engineering, specializing in communications in 1965.

His long, distinguished naval career included several high-profile commands involving large numbers of ships and personnel. Kihune commanded the USS Kitty Hawk and USS Nimitz Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups, involving 30 ships, 190 aircraft and 20,000 sailors, which placed him in command of naval forces in the Indian Ocean during the 1987 crisis with Iran. As Commander of Pacific Fleet Naval Surface Forces, he commanded 200 surface ships, 10 naval stations, a combined military and civilian personnel force of 80,000, and a $4 billion budget. Kihune’s command provided half of the naval forces in support of Operation Desert Shield, and later Operation Desert Storm.

Kihune retired from the Navy in June 1994 and shortly thereafter began active in a variety of economic development and educational initiatives.

Kihune returned to his alma mater in February of 1999 when the State Probate Court appointed him and four other special purpose trustees to settle outstanding issues pertaining to the Internal Revenue Service audit that grew out of a highly publicized State investigation. In May, he was appointed as one of five interim replacements for the former trustees who were removed by the court. Kihune served as acting chair until January 2001 when he was named a permanent trustee.

In his present capacity, Kihune oversees establishment of the policies, goals and objectives of Kamehameha Schools.

In addition to his duties with Kamehameha Schools, Kihune heads numerous boards, including the board of directors of the Economic Development Alliance of Hawai‘i, and the USS Missouri Memorial Association, which he serves as president and vice chair. Kihune is a past director of the Natural Energy Laboratory Board of Directors, and a current member of the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo Advisory Board.

Julie-Beth Kanani Dircks, a psychology major, will be the student speaker.

Dircks, who was born in Los Angeles, moved to Kohala in 1968 where her parents, Henry and Judy AhSam, currently reside. Dircks attended Kamehameha Schools as a boarding student from 1970 until her graduation in 1976.

Dircks, who carries a 3.67 GPA, is a certified substitute public school teacher. She currently works part-time at Hilo Intermediate School as a Parent Community Network Coordinator (PCNC). She spent last summer working as a resident advisor/tutor in UH Hilo’s Upward Bound Program. Dircks also served as an Americorps volunteer. She plans to pursue a masters degree in counseling.

The general theme of her address will be the diversity of traditional and non-traditional students that make up the graduating class. Dircks, who is married with three children and one grandchild, will also emphasize the importance of both having and being a role model.

For more information on commencement, contact Haunani Bernardino at x47705 or email at haunani@hawaii.edu.

For special accommodations, contact Susan Shirachi-Gonsalves at x30816 (V) or x47335 (TTY). Requests for special accommodations should be made at least 10 business days prior to the event.

(Editors note: Ken Hupp is a public information officer.)

Performing Arts featured during December Focus on UH Hilo

Focus on UH Hilo will highlight music and drama on its final fall telecast in December. The program, hosted by Chancellor Rose Tseng, can be seen Wednesday evenings from 8:00 – 8:30 on Channel 54.

Music Instructor Amy Yamasaki will be featured on December 5. Yamasaki, who directs the University’s chorale ensembles, conducted last month’s fall concert by the UH Hilo Chamber Singers. She is also a soprano soloist and will perform Christmas caroles during the program. Joining Yamasaki will be music and drama students who will discuss their various programs and related activities.

Focus on UH Hilo highlights University programs, up and coming developments and the University’s partnerships with various community organizations.
Spotlight
Continued from page 1

three-year hitch before returning home. He enrolled in Hilo College in 1964, then transferred to UH Manoa in 1966 where he earned both B.B.A. and M.B.A. degrees.

He was then hired as a lecturer in the business department at Manoa in 1970 before moving to admissions and records there in 1971. In administration, Omori found his true calling and came home two years later as coordinator of records. He officially became registrar about three years later. He says he has enjoyed his nearly three decades at UH Hilo.

“We did a lot of things and we made a lot of changes,” he said. “We used to use keypunch cards to assign classes. In other words, if you got a card, all you had to do was turn it in the time you made payment and you were registered for the class. Initially, we were holding registration at CH-5. Then, we moved to the Old Gym and did our card distribution there until the Campus Center opened — I believe in the late 1970s. Then, we moved our operations to Campus Center Room 301.

“The punch cards were a more manual process because we had to make sure that the cards were in the proper order,” he added. “Each student had a master name card, followed by their class cards. Even during add/drops, we were just changing cards. If you were dropping an accounting class and adding a finance class, we would switch the cards.”

Certainly, with Omori’s businesslike organizational skills and attention to detail, the registration methodology was always the most efficient possible given the technology of the times. But as times change, so does technology, and of course, methodology as well.

“We switched over to the POISE system in Spring 1982,” Omori said. “POISE is an acronym, but it’s been a long time, so I don’t exactly remember what it stands for. But it created a tape file of the registration term data, which I sent over to the Manoa campus for reporting purposes. The process was the same and the information went to central administration’s computer, but it was easier to send the tape than all the cards. They maintained the perpetual files at the Manoa campus. We used that up until 1989.

“Then, under Chancellor (Edward) Kormondy, we purchased the I.A. system, Information Associates. We then became self-sufficient and maintained our own student information system. We still transfer data to central administration on a remote basis, but we maintain the student’s perpetual file here.”

The high-tech revolution of the 1990s has made registration more of an electronic affair for everyone involved, the student as well as the University administration.

“We began touch-tone registration in 1997 and registration by worldwide web in 1999,” Omori explained. “Those developments have made my job easier in some ways and more difficult in other ways. When you have students not coming in to see you, you have to prepare the files so they are 100 percent accurate, because you don’t want students registering for classes and then finding out what they are getting is not what they want. If they came in to see you, you could spot any mistakes easily, but when the registration is all done on a remote basis, you have to make sure that the system is operating properly before you allow students access to registration. So the preparation process today is more important than it has ever been.”

Omori’s job as registrar involves maintaining the transcripts of students and alumni as well as registration, and as befits a man whose entire career has revolved around numbers, he has noted the changes during his long career on campus with the studied eye of a demographer.

“I guess the biggest change I’ve seen here, other than the changes in technology, is the change in the profile of the student population,” he said. “There are more mainland and international students and the average age of students here has gone from about 22 to 26, so you have more non-traditional students. But there has also been a change in the population demographics of the island in that time, and the change in the student population I think reflects the change in the island population.”

Omori, who says he is looking forward to retirement, said that he will miss the working relationships with the people he has met at UH Hilo, many of whom he has known for 20 years. He is single, and says his number one priority is to “work around the house to make it nicer, both inside and out and to golf about twice a week.”

Although quiet about his personal life, Omori likes to golf and lift weights. He was a competition weightlifter at one time at 56 kilograms (123 pounds). He often went to O‘ahu during school breaks to golf with friends and could be seen at times in the stands at Rainbow Stadium, wearing the green baseball cap and satin jacket of his alma mater and rooting on the baseball ‘Bows, especially during the annual Manoa Easter Baseball Tournament.

A search for Omori’s successor is underway, and in parting, he had a few words of advice for that individual.

“If you have a plan and want to develop it, ask for input from the people who work with you,” he said. “Talk to the students, too. If you have any kind of instructions, have them read them and see if they understand what it is that you are trying to put forth. Try to get input and be open to suggestions.

“But be aware that you have limited resources and you’re not going to be able to satisfy everybody,” he added. “So you have to have a plan that you know that will be successful. Don’t promise anything you don’t have the resources to deliver or that doesn’t fit inside what you know is going to work because there will be people who ask you for everything.

“I’m sure that eventually, the way that I do things will be changed because a person has to do things the way they feel comfortable.”
Campus Events

December

4  Financial Aid Information Session, 10 a.m., CC 306-307
    Financial Aid Information Session, 2 p.m., CC 306-307
5  Focus on UH Hilo, 8 p.m., Channel 54
6  16th Big Island Science Conference, 1-5 p.m., Subaru Telescope Conference Room, University Park
    Financial Aid Information Session, 2 p.m., CC 306-307
7  16th Big Island Science Conference, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., Subaru Telescope Conference Room, University Park
    Financial Aid Information Session, 3 p.m., CC 306-307
8  16th Big Island Science Conference, 9 a.m. - noon, Wentworth 1
9  University Chorus/Community Choral Union Fall Concert featuring Handel’s Messiah and holiday favorites, 4 p.m., Theatre, Admission

13  Last Day of Instruction
    UH HILO HOLIDAY PARTY, 3-5 p.m., Campus Center Dining Room
15  Vulcan basketball vs. Lincoln University, 7:15 p.m., Civic, Admission
17, 18  Vulcan basketball in AmeriSports Coconut Coast Classic, 7:30 p.m., Civic, Admission
17-21 Final Exams
22  Commencement, 9 a.m., UH Hilo New Gym
24  Final Grades due at Records Office
    Fall Semester Ends
25  Holiday: Christmas
27  Vulcan basketball vs. Concordia University, 7:15 p.m., Civic, Admission
28  Vulcan basketball vs. Asbury College, 7:15 p.m., Civic, Admission