LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANGEMENT
AUGUST 6TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource Management (CAFNRM) on August 6th 2010 as part of the 2010 Listening Tour to prepare for the development of the next UH Hilo Strategic Plan. The order of the note may not necessarily reflect the order of the discussion.

Strengths of UH Hilo
The group identified the following as key strengths of UH Hilo:

- Excellent student-to-instructor ratio facilitated by small class sizes
  - Attractive to students because they can build effective relationships with their instructors
  - Faculty are accessible

- Well qualified faculty with many teaching faculty having terminal degrees

- Quality of teaching is high, especially in CAFNRM
  - CAFNRM can be a model for others in teaching
  - Faculty are paid to teach so therefore they take their teaching responsibilities seriously

- Hands-on learning is possible via lab work
  - Faculty teach the labs

- Local community support
  - Note that many owners in the local agriculture industry are CAFNRM graduates

- Location
  - The Big Island is a ‘living laboratory’ which supports many programs, particularly those under CAFNRM, very well
  - Tropical environment

- Cost of education at UH Hilo for the quality is affordable for students

CAFNRM Specific Strengths that Benefit the Broader University

- Diversity
  - Expertise within CAFNRM is diverse enabling students to pursue various interests
• CAFNRM faculty come from diverse backgrounds and cultures enabling a unique teaching and learning experience

• Focus on sustainability at CAFNRM puts UH Hilo in a position of strength

Weaknesses of UH Hilo
The group identified the following as key weaknesses of UH Hilo:

• Inadequate research laboratories for faculty
  o Inconsistent set-up of laboratories across UH Hilo – some colleges have dedicated research labs that are not also used for teaching. This is inequitable. It was suggested that the same model as implemented for Marine Science should be applied across the University.

• Growth of UH Hilo has not been well planned – impact of pushing for larger class sizes
  o There has been an increase in faculty, to reflect an increase in student numbers, with limited or no corresponding increase in infrastructure, particularly classrooms and lab space. Faculty and therefore all fighting to use the same, limited resources to support their teaching.
  o The administration has been pushing to increase class sizes without adequate consideration of the effect that this has on classrooms and other equipment:
    ▪ Classrooms cannot handle large class sizes.
    ▪ More equipment for laboratory-based classes has to be purchased to cater for an increased number of students meaning that costs for colleges such as CAFNRM are higher than other colleges without laboratory-based studies.
    ▪ Whilst hands-on learning in the Big Island’s living laboratory is a significant strength, it also has its limitations when talking about increasing class sizes. That is, only so many people can sit in a UH Hilo minibus and others have to either make their own way to a teaching site, meaning student would have to use their own car and fuel, or cannot attend a field class at all – both represent an inequitable situation.

• UH Hilo has an ineffective relationship with all Community Colleges and UH Manoa

• The administration is too focused on processes required to check boxes rather than the quality of educational outcome.

• There is a need for more General Education (GE) freshman level sections

• Technology and equipment
  o There is a general need to update equipment and technology across campus in a universal way – not just one college.
  o There is an inequitable situation across the campus with regards to access to and use of equipment. CAFNRM appear to have last choice in use of certain facilities (e.g. classrooms).
Recruitment of personnel
- Seems inconsistent across campus with the administration gaining positions and faculty losing positions. The ‘front-line’ should have priority.

**CAFNRM Specific Weaknesses**
- CAFNRM needs to seek higher visibility within UH Hilo in order to have its key role recognized.
- CAFNRM needs its own recruitment, advising, retention and persistence specialist as there is no recruitment program in place. The college also needs its own web manager to keep CAFNRM’s website up-to-date and improve marketing and communication.

**Challenges for UH Hilo**
The group identified the following as challenges for UH Hilo:

- **Management of resources**
  - In a tight financial climate, a key challenge will be to manage available resources in the most effective way, particularly in relation to personnel/positions and programs.
  - There is a key need to ensure that enrolment growth is accommodated within existing resources.
  - In this vein, there needs to be a change of attitude towards resource allocation within the administration.

- **Maximizing the impact of UH Hilo graduates on the local community**
  - CAFNRM in particular can contribute to this given its programs strong relevance to the local job market/industries.

- **Ineffective leadership**
  - The current administration, particularly the Vice-Chancellors, do not understand the varying problems encountered by colleges (especially unique colleges like CAFNRM with equipment and site needs), and therefore issues are not fairly addressed.

- **Push to increase headcount without appropriate consideration of resulting issues**
  - As noted under weaknesses, the push to increase head-count has a detrimental effect on the University’s ability to provide ‘hands-on’ learning. This is because of its effect on transportation for students for fieldwork. That is, each student enrolled on a program offering hands-on learning should expect to be able to access that teaching method. Increased head-count and therefore larger class sizes means that not all students will have a seat in a University minibus and therefore would either have to make their own way to a fieldwork site or not attend at all. This is an inequitable and unfair situation for all students. Each student should have an equal right and equal opportunity to engage in fieldwork without additional cost to themselves.
• Infrastructure
  o How to solve the student housing problem in order to support growth.
  o How to improve transportation for students to and from campus in order to support their social lives and enable them to get to classes.

• CAFNRM needs more space
  o The latest long-range development plan does not have a separate building for CAFNRM noted which is a concern.

• Administrative assessment
  o Currently there are two mechanisms for providing feedback on administrators – through a survey run by faculty congress, and through a 360° feedback survey via [check name]. Attendees noted that this feedback does not seem to be taken on board as they do not see any changes to those in administrative/leadership positions which is demoralizing.

• There needs to be a clear security presence on campus

**Address Challenges**
The following suggestions were made on how to address some of these challenges:

• Effective management of resources
  o Encourage a change of attitude within the administration about how to prioritize funding/resources. This attitude needs to move away from a focus on headcount to that currently appears to drive resource support to units, to a focus on quality.

• Maximize the impact of UH Hilo graduates on the local community
  o Highlight key achievements effectively to demonstrate the contribution that UH Hilo graduates are making to the community. For example, promoting the fact that recent graduates of UH Hilo (through CAFNRM) have received Small Business Awards.

**Priorities for UH Hilo**
The group suggested that UH Hilo should focus on the following priorities over the coming years:

• Ensure that existing programs are adequately resourced

• Infrastructure
  o Take care of the old buildings before building new ones
  o Too many permanent buildings that were meant to be temporary
  o Make the campus more attractive
  o More parking is required, making a more efficient use of space rather than squeezing parking spaces into all available space which could instead be used for buildings/other things
  o More student hang-outs and food options are required
  o A place to congregate for faculty and staff such as a bar is needed
  o Need for classrooms at the UH Hilo farm to efficiently and effectively mix classroom learning in a hands-on environment.
• Long-term goal – to invest in a School of Veterinary Medicine

• Improve UH Hilo’s reputation to help it become a more attractive place to study for students

• Promotion and marketing
  ○ CAFNRM could help to raise UH Hilo’s profile by better promote its products. In order to do this, CAFNRM needs its own kitchen and workshop to develop products and maintain equipment, as well as a store for sales

**CAFNRM Specific Priorities**

• CAFNRM should engage in articulation with other Pacific Islands, nations and other countries

• The CAFNRM farm needs additional staff members and part-time student labor. The student labor is an important aid to staff members since they help complete on-farm jobs and to care for animals on the weekends, gaining valuable experience from working at the farm. However, student workers should not be relied on to ensure the efficient running of the farm so additional resources in the form of more full-time staff are required.

**Appropriateness of the Current UH Hilo Strategic Goals**

The group discussed the current UH Hilo strategic goals and made the following comments:

• The current strategic plan and its associated goals and strategies should be reviewed/assessed so that we know how successful we have been and what is still left to do

• Goal 1:
  ○ Improve by explicitly referring to particular programs
  ○ Use of the term ‘cultural diversity’ seems too lose.
  ○ Improve by stating how UH Hilo will take advantage of the culturally diverse community within which it is situated – e.g. actively promoting/embedding.

• Goal 2 should also refer to support for professional programs

• All of the goals are all too general and broad and therefore difficult to assess

• There should be something about the need to work on better recruitment and retention.

• It would be helpful to have specific goals for each college that would explicitly work towards the University’s broader strategic goals.

**Questions raised by the group**

The group asked why similar questions to those asked in the survey consultation (held from April to June) were being asked again through this listening tour. Siân Millard, facilitator, explained that the reason why the questions were very similar was for three reasons:

1. Obtain the unique view of each group being met with
2. Seek views on these important questions in a face-to-face setting where people can ‘bounce’ ideas off one another
3. Include the views of those people who did not complete the survey