LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES HUMANITIES DIVISION
SEPTEMBER 29TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the College of Arts and Sciences Humanities Division on September 29th 2010 as part of the 2010 Listening Tour to prepare for development of the next UH Hilo Strategic Plan. The summary reflects the collection of individual comments made, not necessarily the consensus view of the entire group or the official view of UH Hilo. 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:

• Diversity
  o Particularly of the student body with regards to a mixture of students of different cultures, backgrounds, languages and religions which all serve to broaden the student experience.
  o Such diversity is beneficial not just for the students studying here but it also serves as a valuable strength for attracting people of different backgrounds to UH Hilo.

• Location
  o Strong programs have been developed that capitalize on the unique environment within which the university is situated
  o Good weather attracts people to UH Hilo

• Small class sizes
  o Facilitates a high level of student-faculty interaction

• Very good faculty

• Particular academic strengths
  o Marine science
  o Astronomy
  o Potential for strengths in the arts, particularly languages (given the university’s unique location) and performing arts (with links to the local community)

• Involved Big Island community
Community members sit on various groups, boards and committees to help support the university.

Good legislative support

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

- **Vision and mission**
  - Lack of a shared vision for the university
  - The current mission statement is too general. It needs to set out who we are as a university and what our focus is. This will help to establish our identity.

- **Faculty morale**
  - Underlying sense of distrust at every level – between faculty and the administration, between different faculty groups, between faculty and the faculty congress.
  - Faculty need to have more confidence in the university’s strengths. An identity needs to be developed that faculty can be proud of.

- **Poor communication**
  - Little consultation with faculty on university-wide policy making or issues that affect the running of UH Hilo.
    - There is a heavy dependence on surveys to solicit feedback. Results of these surveys are usually shared but there is little or no follow-up on the results in terms of telling people what the next steps will be or how feedback has been taken on board. There is therefore a general lack of follow-up.
      - One way to address this would be to provide such feedback at the new annual faculty retreat which will take place probably every January. The retreat would offer a good way for faculty to be caught-up on things.
  - There is a need to reflect whether the current mechanism for student engagement on policy-issues is effective (i.e. having a student rep on committees) or whether more needs to be done to engage the broader student body.

- **Lack of a student and faculty community**
  - Could be improved by providing dedicated meeting spaces for faculty and students so that they can ‘hang-out’ with their colleagues/peers.
  - There is currently no period set aside for meetings for faculty to come together (but it was noted that this is partly a space issue as well as there are limited areas to meet).

- **Development of graduate programs versus undergraduate core**
  - In terms of funding, the issue goes two ways: (1) Those involved in graduate program development feel they don’t have adequate resources to develop the programs, and (2) those involved with undergraduate programs feel that funds needed to maintain and develop undergraduate programs are being diverted to develop graduate-level programs.
  - There is also a potential issue of dilution of faculty as more graduate programs put more pressure on existing faculty (particularly full professors) to cover the more demanding graduate-level teaching.
• Lack of confidence in the GE (General Education) program
  o Part of this may be a symptom of a tendency for faculty to focus on their own
department rather than looking more broadly at the university-wide level

• No professional development for faculty and professional staff members

• Too few tenure-track faculty, too many non-tenure track faculty
  o This is particularly acute within humanities

• Student advising
  o Would benefit from being formally scheduled

• Not enough interdisciplinary effort

• Teaching evaluation system is over-reliant on computerized tick-box surveys. It would be more
beneficial to seek written responses from students.

• Lack of office space
  o This is a contributing factor to poor morale

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

• Identity
  o How to establish an identity that faculty can be confident in
    ▪ Developing a clear identity could help to improve faculty morale

• Mission
  o UHH’s current mission defines the university as an undergraduate teaching institution
    but there are currently mixed-messages about this with a focus increasingly on
    developing graduate programs and undertaking research. This tension against the current
    mission needs to be resolved.

• Enrollment
  o How to manage an increase in students without a comparable increase in resources
  o Perhaps we need to ask the question whether growth is necessarily a good thing (a
greater number of those enrolling don’t appear to be adequately prepared which is
perhaps an indicator of lowered admissions standards)
    ▪ Tuition fees currently account for 50% of UHH’s budget. If growth is not
      necessarily a good thing, how do we balance this against the need to pay bills.

• Reputation
  o Improve UH Hilo’s reputation by raising academic standards
• Teaching standards
  o How to work with faculty to improve teaching standards
    ▪ More consistent professional development may be helpful here.

• Faculty evaluation and reward system
  o A university-wide faculty mentoring program may be particularly helpful for new faculty

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

• Establish and clarify UH Hilo’s identity
  o Ensure that identity is one which all at the university can be proud of

• Improve communication

• Raise faculty morale

• Improve student engagement

• Improve UH Hilo’s status within the UH System
  o It is currently improving but more needs to be done

Appropriateness of the Current UHH Strategic Goals
The group discussed the current UHH strategic goals and made the following comments:

• The current goals are fine but it was perhaps the objectives and measures that sit behind the goals that were originally poorly constructed and not followed-up

• The goals need to balance being broad and being specific.
  o It isn’t clear what all the goals mean. There are ambiguous terms like’ dynamic community involvement’

• Reference to new initiatives needs to be back-up with appropriate resources

• Missing from the current goals is a reference to:
  o Raising faculty morale
  o Raising academic standards
  o Creating an identity to be proud of