LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES: SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION
SEPTEMBER 22ND 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the College of Arts and Sciences: Social Sciences Division on September 22nd 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:

- Faculty – good teachers
- Research – good researchers
- Good student faculty interaction
  - Small class sizes facilitates teaching and learning
  - Opportunity for student involvement in faculty research projects
- Diverse student population
- Location
  - Hilo and the Big Island is an attractive place to live
  - Even though the university is located on the ‘Big’ Island, different areas of the island and indeed the university campus are relatively easy and quick to access
  - The local geography and physical/cultural environment offers unique research and hands-on learning opportunities, reflecting the island as a ‘living laboratory’
- Faculty autonomy
  - Faculty are given autonomy to decide what they teach, when they teach and what to research
  - There is no ‘soft’ money pressure on tenure-track faculty to supplement their income with research awards.
- Community involvement
Both in terms of research and practicum

- Some nice facilities (e.g. the UCB building and Student Life Center)

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

- Disproportionate resource allocation of faculty across the colleges
  - Social Sciences Division has 1/3 of all CAS faculty, but is responsible for graduating ½ of all CAS students
  - It was noted in relation to this point that CAS (as a whole) does not a ‘deal’ for salaries/staffing as do the other colleges (e.g. CAFNRM on 11 month contract, CoBE salaries matched to market trends).

- Infrastructure
  - Not enough space in general – classrooms, laboratory space, student housing
  - UH Hilo is now requiring more research of faculty but cannot provide adequate resources including research space, research staff support and start-up funds. The issue of not being able to offer start-up funds is a particular problem with regards to not being able to offer incentives to new faculty.
  - The number of students has outgrown the infrastructure and facilities available
  - Operation of yearly scheduling, with rooms controlled by CCECS over the summer, keeps the university from being able to fully utilize its facilities

- Budget and fiscal management
  - General lack of fiscal transparency
    - For example, grant money is siphoned from the top (as it comes into the university) to the bottom and it is unclear where the money taken from grants (such as indirect costs and faculty buy-out costs) goes and how it is utilized.
  - Faculty/divisions/departments are given limited autonomy to spend their budgets as appropriate
  - Department and divisional budgets have been cut in half and delivery of budgets is often late which impacts on department/divisional planning

- Communication
  - Failure of the administration to communicate clearly and in a timely manner, including a failure of the administration to respond to communications/suggestions from the faculty

- No merit system
  - There is currently no merit-award system at UH Hilo. One should be developed, and appropriately funded, that recognizes all aspects of merit at the individual, departmental, divisional and college levels, such as teaching, research and contribution towards key goals like graduation rates.

- Priorities of the administration
The administration does not appear to be focusing on the most effective priorities for UH Hilo. At the moment a lot of focus is on General Education and Pre-build schedules, but there is limited or no information about how the administration is working to find alternative revenue streams for the university to both address the current budget shortfall and place UH Hilo on a more sustainable footing for the future. In this uncertain budget situation, this is where the administration should be focusing their efforts and engaging the rest of the campus in.

- Part of such work would be to grow the UH Hilo Development Office and provide them with the resources to help generate income for the university.

- Low faculty morale

- No funds for teacher development

- No or limited release time for grant writing
  - Heavy teaching loads generally impact on the ability of faculty to prepare grant submissions and undertake research
  - This particularly impacts on new professors who need to build their research portfolio

- Lack of student support
  - Lack of student housing
    - There is a need for more housing and improvement of that which already exists
  - Lack of public transportation to and from the campus meaning it is not easy for students to access Hilo town from the university or vice-versa
  - There needs to be more transparency over the use of student fees

- Lack of childcare facilities on campus

- Lack of clarity about who represents lecturers and tutors at governance levels
  - Lack of voting rights on policy issues/lack of seats on Faculty Congress
  - Disproportionate faculty representation in Congress – CAS is underrepresented

- Lack of support for graduate students
  - No graduate teaching assistantships
  - As a result it can be difficult to attract some graduate students to UH Hilo

- Little proactive planning (e.g. GE implementation)
  - UH Hilo is currently more reactive rather than proactive in our planning

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

- Identity
  - Resolving UH Hilo identity through answering the questions ‘who are we’ and ‘who do we want to be’ is critical. Effective resolution of these questions will result in a clear
identity and direction for UH Hilo which may help to resolve some of the weaknesses raised above – or at least provide a clearer framework for decision making.

- Implementation of the UH Hilo strategic plan
  - How to ensure that all departments are integrating into and work towards the mission and goals that will be set out in the campus-wide strategic plan

- How to preserve the social sciences and humanities within the push to focus on STEM subjects and skill sets. This links to the current trend to prepare students for jobs and more jobs are requiring STEM skills.
  - Emphasize that ‘Science’ includes natural and social science
  - Emphasize the importance of qualitative as well as quantitative skills

- Infrastructure
  - How to meet the infrastructural needs of our growing campus. We have already outgrown our current infrastructure which is putting pressures on faculty, staff and students. The issue needs to be urgently addressed and proactively and realistically planned for.
  - How to solve the parking problem on campus (lack of)

- How to balance the quality of undergraduate programs whilst supporting the development of appropriate graduate programs.

- UH System move to formula funding may force UH Hilo to do things differently
  - The university need to proactively plan for and anticipate the impact of this funding change

- How to make education cost effective for students given the current trend to move towards a tuition-driven model of education provision
  - Students are therefore increasingly being seen as ‘clients’ who are paying for a ‘service’ from their university and therefore ‘expect’ a certain level of teaching quality, facilities and general infrastructure

- How to recruit and retain quality faculty
  - The current lack of ‘perks’ such as a competitive salary and good infrastructure (like lab facilities) means that attracting and retaining quality faculty is increasingly difficult.

- The impact of the GE (General Education) Curriculum
  - CAS will bear the brunt of the new GE curriculum. Plans need to be put in place about ‘how’ the colleges will implement and run the new system, and its potential impact on aspects like student graduation rates and courses offered should be monitored over time.

**Priorities for UH Hilo**
The group suggested that UH Hilo should focus on the following priorities over the coming years:
• Find innovative ways to attract and retain quality faculty

• Develop merit and recognition systems to reward teaching, research, divisions and departments.
  o This has to be ‘beyond the talk’ – beyond a verbal or written ‘thank you’

• Focus on developing a strong departmental structure versus a divisional structure

• Define UH Hilo’s identity – who we are and where we want to be

• Improve and increase the level of infrastructure
  o Lab space
  o Classroom space
  o Student housing

• Improve leadership
  o The university needs focus and that focus needs to be provided by the university’s leadership
  o At the college and the campus-wide levels

• Evaluate the distribution of clerical and staff support at the department level and determine if more support is required or if re-distribution of existing resources is required

• Clarify the role of distance learning and develop a strategic approach towards it

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

Specific points:
• Goals 1, 2, and 3 appear to be the same

• Goals 4, 5, and 6 seem to be elements of achieving goals 1, 2 and 3

• Missing from these goals is one about student experience in terms of working to ensure students are proud to be a student of UH Hilo

General points:
• Whatever goals UH Hilo accepts need to be borne out of and support the university’s identity. As such, the first questions that need to be resolved are ‘who are we’ (mission) and ‘who do we want to be’ (vision)

• The current goals are too general and therefore not measureable
• Some of the terms used within the current goals are ambiguous and therefore yield a lack of focus as different people can interpret different meanings from them

• We have already not met the current goals as we cannot support the growth we have experienced. We are ‘always playing catch-up

• We need to determine how effective the university is as meeting the goals we set out for ourselves.
  o There needs to be a clear and systematic focus on effective implementation and monitoring
  o Measurement of effectiveness should include appropriate quantitative and qualitative measures to give a more rounded evaluation.