LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE CHANCELLOR’S ADVISORY BOARD
AUGUST 19TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the Chancellor’s Advisory Board on August 19th 2010 as part of the 2010 Listening Tour to prepare for the 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:

• Cultural diversity
  o UHH is a ‘melting pot’ of different people with different backgrounds from all over world working and studying here. This extraordinary mix of people enables students to experience different cultures in one place.

• Location
  o Access to natural resources
  o Natural beauty of the Big Island
  o Hilo is a livable, affordable town and many people want to stay and make their lives here
  o UH Hilo’s position on the Big Island of Hawaii means that it offers a good access point to student populations from across the Pacific Rim
  o Positive image of being located on a tropical island with mild temperate climate throughout the year.

• Affordable tuition

• Potential for expansion
  o UH Hilo owns much land so there is a strong potential for further expansion

• Academic program strengths
  o UH Hilo offers an excellent starting point for studies in astronomy, volcanology, pharmacy, Hawaiian studies, ocean studies and environmental management. In particular, the university’s programs in Hawaiian studies create unique opportunities for students.
• Size of student population
  ○ It is not too large that students get ‘lost’ in numbers

• Community support
  ○ The broader Hilo community likes that UH Hilo is located here

• Age diversity of the students
  ○ Demonstrates that UH Hilo appeals to students of various ages

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

• UH Hilo’s position with the UH System
  ○ Perception that UH Hilo is treated as the ‘Cinderella step-child’ within the UH System in that UH Hilo’s attributes and potential do not seem to be fully recognized by the System.

• Infrastructural weaknesses
  ○ Lack of student housing
  ○ Lack of public transportation to and from campus
    ▪ It rains a lot in Hilo which impacts on comfort levels for walking to and from places. This perception of Hilo could be a consideration for some people when deciding where to study. Lack of public transportation to and from campus to both assist access from the campus to town and to protect students from adverse weather means that this perception is difficult to counter/manage
  ○ Problematic campus access
    ▪ Lack of physical gateways into campus
    ▪ It is not easy to navigate into and around campus

• Reputation
  ○ The impact on the university of Hilo town not being seen as attractive to some potential students as Honolulu is for UH Manoa.
  ○ UH Hilo is perhaps seen as a second choice university for many families/students on the Big Island/the state.
    ▪ However, partly this may be to due to some families encouraging their children to study on the mainland/at an international university to expand the diversity of their educational experience.
  ○ Little awareness of UH Hilo on the West side of the Big Island which is perhaps due to the university’s lack of physical presence/outreach to that side.

• Branding
  ○ Inconsistent branding across the university does not give a consistent collegiate feel. This should be improved.
• Funding  
  o UH Hilo faculty/staff have to spend an extraordinary amount of time at the state legislature putting their case for funding for the university. This is an ineffective use of time and resources that in itself incurs a significant cost to the university.

• Enrollment  
  o Out-of-state enrollment caps are detrimental to UH Hilo in that it inhibits growth and limits the extra revenue that the university can seek to bring in.

• Community engagement  
  o UH Hilo faculty and staff are not ‘visible’ enough within the local community - the community should know the key faculty and staff and what their roles are. Private sector workers are members of numerous UH Hilo Board and Committees and actively engage in community events like charity auctions – it is noticeable that UH Hilo is not well represented at such events or on external Boards and Committees such as those for not-for-profit organizations. There is therefore an apparent separation between the community engagement enacted by the business community and that enacted by UH Hilo faculty/staff.

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

• Student housing  
  o How to improve the student housing situation

• Managing growth  
  o How to keep UH Hilo’s unique personality as it grows

• Tracking graduates  
  o How to improve tracking of UH Hilo graduates and management of the alumni database so that we know who has graduated from the University and where they are now.

• Remaining sensitive to potential cultural conflicts  
  o It is important that the Chancellor and all at UH Hilo remain sensitive to the Hawaiian culture within which the university is situated and embraces. The university appears to be positioning itself as a unique bridge between Western science and indigenous knowledge and wisdom. This is positive as it brings recognition to Hawaiian knowledge and how it can inform Western models and methods. However, the challenge is to ensure that as UH Hilo develops its competence as an ‘interface’ we also ensure that cultural wisdom keepers will benefit in a like fashion as the researchers and the academics.
    • As UH Hilo becomes a recognized leader in Hawaiian cultural studies and language, there may be elevated and possibly differing expectations by the Hawaiian community about how things ‘should be done’. It will therefore be important to continue to cultivate UH Hilo’s relationship with the Hawaiian
community and involve the community in discussions about things like curriculum development and academic research.

- **Management of Mauna Kea**
  - How to ensure funding of astronomy and management activities for Mauna Kea so that UH Hilo can continue to ‘do things right’ on the mountain
  - How to ensure that UH Hilo keeps the community involved and informed about activities on Mauna Kea

- **UH Hilo sports**
  - Sports budgets tend to be at risk during budgetary crises – is this the case of UH Hilo and if so how can we manage that potential threat
  - How to stabilize and improve the image of the UH Hilo athletics department

- **UH System**
  - How to work together effectively across the UH System
  - How to counteract apparent adverse System politics toward UH Hilo that impact on the university’s ability to host key Centers of Expertise. Noted was the fact that certain programs/colleges/institutes could benefit from being situated on the Big Island at UH Hilo given the university’s unique geographic and environmental location – e.g. the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) (because of the Big Island’s agriculture industry) and Institute for Astronomy (IfA) (because of the world-class observatories on Mauna Kea). However, it was also noted that there are benefits to these types of investments being situated at Manoa given UH Manoa’s disciplinary expertise and the fact that research institutes like the IfA benefit from being situated in a research-focused environment. The challenge then is to better coordinate with institutes and colleges on other campuses to improve System-wide collaboration to yield benefits for all involved.

- **Funding**
  - How to leverage access to public and private development money/funds

- **Community engagement**
  - Opportunity: There is a lack of meeting space in Hilo for local businesses/community groups in general. To demonstrate UH Hilo’s commitment to the community (and the fact that University is funded by the community) the university could open-up larger meeting spaces to the public.
  - How to encourage increased public recognition of UH Hilo as a viable industry on the Big Island – both as a provider of jobs in the area and as an organization that has a major role in addressing the skills needs of the island and state
  - As the university grows it should seek to participate more in Hilo town and the rest of the Big Island

- **Faculty/staff recruitment and retention**
  - There is a need to identify key staff members/posts and have strategies in place to replace them should they move-on from UH Hilo
• Partnership working
  o How to develop a more visible and amicable relationship between Hawaii Community College and UH Hilo with a view to enhance and seek more joint activities and reduce duplication
  o How to work more effectively with the Department of Education to help ensure that High School students are prepared for higher education study

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

• Infrastructure
  o Student housing
    ▪ The group identified improvement to student housing as the number one priority for the university
  o Given the central importance of Hawaiian studies at UH Hilo, complete the Hawaiian Studies building in a timely manner

• Improve UH Hilo’s standing within the UH System
  o Improve relationships within and cooperation across the UH System

• Improve marketing and communication
  o Develop and employ strategic marketing across all aspects of the university
    ▪ One strategy could be to work with Hilo’s/other Big Island towns sister cities to attract students from those areas (e.g. La Serena, Chile and Nago, Japan)
  o Ensure that the local Big Island community know how the university is managing Mauna Kea – demonstrate that the university is managing the mountain sensitively and responsibly

• Help students to find jobs once they graduate
  o Improve career counseling in general
    ▪ For mainland students, perhaps develop placement strategies/partnerships on the mainland to help students find jobs at where they’ve come from
    ▪ For local Big Island/state students, partner with local businesses to create more placement/internship opportunities to help prepare students for work and give them valuable work experience that would make them more marketable once they graduate
  o To help inform work in the area, determine what percentage of graduates from UH Hilo have a job after 6 months of graduation and, of those with jobs, which sectors they have moved into with their degree.

• Enable and promote cross-disciplinary working, teaching and learning
  o Work with local High Schools to build on the cross-disciplinary teaching and learning model employed there
  o As the bed-rock of UH Hilo, weave Hawaiian values and culture into all academic programs
Appropriateness of the Current UHH Strategic Goals
This question was not asked of the group due to lack of time but members were invited to submit any comments on the current goals direct to the facilitator, Siân Millard at uuhplan@hawaii.edu, or through the companion survey to the listening tour (www.surveymonkey.com/listening).