LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE UNITS
OCTOBER 6TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the Chancellor’s Office Units on October 6th 2010 as part of the 2010 Listening Tour to prepare for development of the next UH Hilo Strategic Plan. Units invited were: Chancellor’s Office staff, ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center, Office of Campus Technology, Office of University Relations, Office of Mauna Kea Management and the Center for Global Education and Exchange. 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:

- Ethnic and cultural diversity
  - This affords a certain international aspect to UH Hilo which positively impacts on the lives of the university’s faculty, staff, students and wider community.
  - The university is a cultural and language epicenter

- Location
  - Unique opportunities for fieldwork and out-of-class learning are available because of the university’s unique environmental, geographical and cultural location
  - Our location enables us to serve people from across the Pacific nations

- Good connection to the local community
  - The university receives direct support from the university both in terms of dollars and involvement in university activities/committees

- Student-centered faculty

- Small class sizes
  - Enables one-on-one relationships to be formed/interactions between faculty and staff

- Small-size
  - UH Hilo’s small size means that we are relatively quick to adapt and respond to new opportunities
  - Because we are small, we are perhaps the ‘under-dog’ and therefore strive to be better
• Variety of accessible education through distance learning and community programs

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

• Declining state support and an uncertain funding future

• Identity
  o We don’t know who we are or what we want to be
  o We are trying to be all things to all people
    • We need to focus our efforts and prioritize resources

• Low morale

• Too much bureaucracy
  o Can’t adapt quickly enough because outdated processes and arduous procedures can hinder progress
  o Outdated resources
  o Too many paper-based processes
  o Too many signatures required for procurement requests

• Limited range of graduate programs (and to some extent undergraduate programs and UH Hilo does not offer the same variety as UH Manoa)

• Infrastructure/facility issues
  o Shortages of physical facilities such as:
    • Student housing – this hasn’t been increased despite significant growth
    • Parking
  o It is not clear what is the main entrance to the university – there is not real sense of ‘arrival’ on campus
  o Ageing of current physical facilities
  o No childcare facility on campus (for students, faculty and staff)
    • This seems to be incongruous with UH Hilo’s claim to be and support ‘ohana.
  o Lack of commercial amenities both on campus and within walking distance of campus

• Lack of staffing
  o Particularly in the area of technical support given the growth in technology-enhanced/facilitated learning and research. Technology use has increased at UH Hilo but the staff resources to support it have not.
    • One consideration in this regard could be to re-evaluate the shift patterns of technology support staff. They currently work typical day shift patterns but this is when classes on in progress so routine maintenance can be difficult. There may be merit in investigating whether flexible shift patterns to include evenings would be beneficial/possible
• Lack of opportunities for professional development

• Weak arts program
  o Given UH Hilo unique cultural location we should be doing more to involve and attract the local community to university arts events

• Lack of communication about the fate of the China-US Center – what is the current situation?

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

• Identifying our identity

• Budget
  o How to ensure we have the resources to support growth
    ▪ How to find the money to build more student housing

• How to improve community engagement
  o UH Hilo’s current community engagement has been more one-way (what can we get from the community) rather than two-way (what does the community need and how can we meet those needs). We need to redress this balance.
    ▪ The university should work to become a ‘go-to’ resource for the community – especially one that local businesses can tap into (a good recent example of this was business majors helping a local business with their marketing strategies – see http://www.hawaii.edu/news/article.php?aId=3732)

• How to reconnect with our alumni
  o Create programs and events to bring back alumni to the campus and encourage their involvement in university activities
    ▪ However, it was noted that many alumni benefits only seem to be for people on Oahu so there can be little incentive (other than university pride) to join the alumni association for UH Hilo.

• Changing perceptions
  o There seems to be a perception held by potential local students and the state that UH Hilo cannot provide a quality educational experience. The challenge is how to change that perception through better promotion of what we do and where our strengths lie.
  o How to overcome the negative perceptions of Hilo
  o How to challenge the perception that UH Hilo is just a feeder-school

• How to keep up with the competition

• Communication
  o Communicating our story and qualities better to our constituencies and the broader state
Communicating the benefits of higher education that reach beyond those related to the job market
  - Particularly target programs (e.g. the arts) that don’t have obvious job outcomes but can legitimately and effectively be applied in the workforce
  - How to make students, faculty and staff more aware of international programs

• How to improve processes and procedures by reducing bureaucracy

• Outreach and accessibility
  - Expand educational services across the Big Island

• Graduation and retention
  - Work more with students who aren’t initially prepared for university-level study
  - Shorten the time it takes students to graduate
    - Ensure that classes are available for students to enable them to graduate.

• Encouraging commercial outlet development near (and in) the university campus to benefit students

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

• Tackle the hardest issues first in terms of identifying those choices and decisions that need to be made and could have a far reaching positive effect on a myriad of other issues
  - Identify our identity

• Student housing

• Staffing
  - Particularly with ensuring sufficient staff resource to support technology

• Student learning (documenting), quality programs and academic rigor
  - Adjust for an increasingly different student population with different needs and expectations

• Increasing the graduation rate by focusing on retention

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

Specific points:
• Goal 1
  - Would benefit from referring to broader international relations afforded by our geographical location
• Goal 2
  o Should also refer to graduate programs. Development of more graduate programs would not only challenge and discourage the perception of UH Hilo as a feeder school, but it will also encourage faculty research and student engagement in that research.

General points:
• The goals are too general and don’t speak to UH Hilo – they don’t make us, us
  o Tough decisions need to be made to make the next set of goals more specific and targeted.

• Ensure that the goals are backed-up with clear actions on ‘how’ the goals will be achieved (e.g. how will more funds be sought?)

• There should be more emphasis on technology where appropriate