LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING FOR UH HILO CLERICAL AND SECRETARIAL STAFF
OCTOBER 19TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held for UH Hilo clerical and secretarial staff on October 19th 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:

- Location, location, location
  - The Big Island offers a living laboratory which particularly benefits programs such as astronomy, volcanology and marine science
  - Cultural diversity afforded by our location – of our local population, and that then reflected by our student body

- Small class sizes
  - Students benefit from more personalized attention from their teacher

- Small university size
  - Many people who work and study at the university know each other because of its small size which facilitates a feeling of camaraderie

- New infrastructure
  - UH Hilo has been successful in obtaining grants to build new buildings (e.g. Science and Technology building, College of Pharmacy and College of Hawaiian Language) to strengthen its infrastructure

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

- Class availability
  - Although small class sizes are a strength, the lack of class availability means that some students can’t get into classes which means they can’t graduate on time
    - Offering larger class sizes or additional classes would be a solution
• However, note that for science labs, there is a limit on how many students can be accommodated in laboratories so larger class sizes won’t be the answer there. There is also not enough staff to support lab classes.

• No evening classes
  o Lack of support for those students who may be working

• Infrastructure
  o There is a general lack of infrastructure to support the students, faculty and staff at UH Hilo. This includes:
    ▪ Parking
    ▪ Classes
    ▪ Offices
    ▪ Student housing
    ▪ Faculty housing
  o The money has not kept up with the need to grow the infrastructure
  o The university has the space, in terms of land, but does not have the money to build the physical structures needed

• Leadership
  o Lack of strong leadership from some of the Vice-chancellors
  o Those in leadership positions need to ensure that policies, processes and procedures are applied fairly and consistently

• Lack of support for and recognition of clerical and secretarial staff
  o Lack of respect for clerical and secretarial support staff
    ▪ Actions not seen to be valued. Demoralizing.
  o Lack of training and development opportunities for support staff
    ▪ Where training courses are offered they are more often than not only offered from UH Manoa. This therefore incurs a monetary and time cost to attend and as a result some bosses are reluctant to release their support staff to attend training/development events.
      • A suggestion to resolve this is for UH Hilo (particularly the Business Office) to liaise more closely with UH Manoa to coordinate training events to leverage technology so that training could be delivered virtually to UH Hilo support staff via live-video in the high-tech interactive classrooms. This would benefit UH Hilo support staff and be more efficient in terms of time and money. Alternatively, it would be more efficient to bring 2 or so trainers from UH Manoa to train people on site at UH Hilo, than send 10plus staff from UH Hilo to UH Manoa.
      o The administration needs to get involved more to fight for UH Hilo on issues such as these.
    ▪ As well as training on new developments/systems, support staff need refresher courses on key processes so that they can be made aware of any changes and
keep up-to-date with the latest technology. In these situations, face-to-face training would be more effective and efficient than an email.

- Civil service recruitment freeze
  - The civil service recruitment freeze has put particular pressure on clerical and secretarial staff who are undertaking more work with fewer people.
  - There is inequity in rank, responsibilities and staff classifications. This is demoralizing for staff.

- Lack of opportunities for clerical and secretarial staff to serve on committees.
  - As the implementers of a lot of new processes, procedures and policies, the views and experiences of clerical and secretarial staff would be useful on relevant committees
    - E.g. Curriculum Central – clerical and secretarial staff were not involved in the process, were not offered training on the system, and don’t have access to the system, but they are being asked by some faculty to get involved.

- Inconsistency in processes and procedures

- Communication
  - Poor internal communication and inconsistent communication from the System
    - Some people are given information and some not
    - There is inappropriate cc'ing of emails and in some cases important emails are sent just to one person without copy to others which leaves risk of single-point-failure should that person be on leave/sick
  - Inefficient internal communication
    - E.g. HR Rainbow of opportunities is sent to all secretaries and then all secretaries have to send the notice on to all in their units. As the HR Rainbow of opportunities is for all faculty/staff it may be more efficient for HR to issue the notice direct through ‘Announce’.

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

- Growth versus recruitment freeze
  - How can we grow and accommodate new programs, more personnel and more students if we cannot hire clerical and secretarial staff to support the growth

- How to determine if all employees are being productive
  - How do we know if someone is doing a good job and how can we work with those who need to improve?
    - Clerical and secretarial staff have an annual appraisal. How are APT’s and faculty evaluated? Who keeps track of their work?

- How to challenge perceptions
Specifically, how to challenge and reverse the perception that ‘doing less’ work is rewarded more favorably than doing a good job.

- Infrastructure
  - Look at our current physical, human and monetary resources and determine what we can support.
    - The UHH budget needs to be better controlled and monitored

- We need to focus/specialize our academic programs - ‘jack of all trades but master of none’

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

- Focus on the students
  - Improve recruitment
    - Ensure that marketing and admissions are on the same page, selling the same story

- Change our image
  - We need to address the perception that UH Hilo is a school of ‘last resort’

- Infrastructure
  - Address and improve the student housing situation – more, and upgrades to existing housing is required

- Match academic programs to workforce needs
  - Identify the job opportunities and needs in the community and re-evaluate/align our programs to address those needs

- Engender collegial working at the university
  - ‘Ohana begins at home
    - The Chancellor has a strong leadership role to play in encouraging university employees to think about the university as a whole and to value all who work for it. Activities, policies and procedures need to be considered and developed from a university-wide perspective, considering both faculty and staff. Notions of divisiveness and elitism should be avoided (e.g. the current plans for a ‘faculty lounge’ appear divisive as they the name implies that such a gathering place would exclude staff).

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, Sían Millard at uuhplan@hawaii.edu, or through the companion survey to the listening tour (www.surveymonkey.com/listening).