LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH UH HILO DEPARTMENT CHAIRS  
OCTOBER 1ST 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with UH Hilo Department Chairs on October 1st 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:

- Good student-faculty interaction
- Relatively small class sizes
- Faculty are dedicated and hard working
- Diverse student body
- Diverse academic programs for a university of this size
  - Ability to do interdisciplinary research and form interdisciplinary programs
  - Addition of new programs (growth of academic programs)
- Location
  - UH Hilo’s unique cultural (Hawaiian, as well as a myriad of other cultures such as Japanese and Filipino) and natural location has a positive impact on instruction and research.
- Physical space (land) to expand into
- Positive and supportive interaction with federal and state agencies

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

- Location
Given its island setting in the Pacific, UH Hilo is isolated from other universities beyond the UH System. This can make it difficult (in terms of cost and time) to attract people to come here (students and faculty/staff), and it can make it difficult for faculty to develop and maintain professional relationships with their peers on the mainland and internationally.

- However, it was noted that improved technology/communication is making the latter easier.

- Lack of development and training opportunities, particularly for junior faculty

- Infrastructure
  - Lack of physical plant to support growth
    - Classrooms, research laboratories, housing
  - Current facilities are not maintained appropriately which can give a negative impression to visitors to the university
  - Lack of public spaces on campus for faculty/staff/students to congregate/get together
  - There are no names on the buildings and a lack of signage so it can be difficult to navigate around campus
    - E.g. the portable buildings are not temporary so should be given names (and signage) rather than PBX. Another possibility would be to paint the buildings different colors (reflecting the tropical environment within which the university is located) to give each a unique identifying quality (rather than brown and tan).
  - The current parking and parking permit system is ineffective
    - It would be more efficient to computerize the process

- The Library isn’t able to provide access to the same online databases as Manoa which can hinder research as it takes time to request articles/books through interlibrary loan.

- Lack of support for out-of-classroom activities for students

- Budgeting and procurement
  - Procurement issues
    - Too many signatures are required for the procurement requests which slows down the process
    - The Business Office can be ‘reflexively adversarial’
      - Whilst recognizing that the Business Office has to follow particular procurement rules to ensure appropriate purchasing and conformity with legal requirements, the group recommended that the Business Office take a more proactive role in assisting faculty with the procurement process and helping them better understand its rules and the reasons for those rules to help facilitate smoother and more efficient procurement experiences – this would benefit both the Business Office and those who request procurements.

  - Budgeting
    - There is a general lack of transparency in the budgetary process (all aspects)
• Lack of funding to support research

• Lack of secretarial and clerical support for faculty

• Clarification is required about student advising in terms of roles and responsibilities of faculty and guidance for how to effectively and appropriately advise students

• No teaching assistants

• Lack of accountability for teaching standards
  o Stronger evaluations of teaching are required - this is a union issue

• Lack of leadership and management skills in the administration
  o Administrative work is being pushed down to faculty
  o Administration needs to remember their main role is to support teaching

• Department chair specific:
  o Department chair’s have a lot of responsibility for relatively little recognition from the administration
    ▪ Department Chairs are not generally included in the communication chain or involved in development of policy. This appears disjointed when Department Chairs are typically the enablers and implementers of new policies/new decisions.

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

• Infrastructure
  o Ensure there is sufficient infrastructure to support growth:
    ▪ Classrooms and furniture
    ▪ Studio and research space
    ▪ Student housing
    ▪ Working electronics/technical infrastructure
  * Currently computers etc are paid for from departmental budgets making each department responsible for all of their equipment. This seems to be an inefficient way to purchase and maintain equipment (computers especially).

• Seek and attract more endowments
  o Develop better relations with UH Hilo alumni and improve data collection about alumni

• Undergraduate interest in health sciences is growing very rapidly. Infrastructure and faculty positions are needed to support this growth, especially in biology and chemistry.
• Reintegrate departments (e.g. Art) onto the main campus.

• Improve graduation rates
  o Provide remedial support to students
    ▪ Improve engagement and partnership with the Community Colleges to help bring students up to the level necessary for university study.

• Create good pathways for communication and keep them flowing
  o Include Department Chairs in consultations and recognize the important role they can play in communication and implementation.

• Revisit the current college/division structure
  o It may be stronger to form separate colleges for the different divisions of CAS and focus on the college/department level split rather than college/division/department split for CAS.

• Improve UH Hilo’s academic reputation
  o Improve promotion of the university, its departments and its programs so that people know about the excellent work that goes on here.

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

• External fundraising
  o Build endowments and ensure the resulting funds can be applied to student learning

• Improve coordination with the community colleges

• Enhance coordination with federal and state agencies to leverage more funds and engage in more research

• Create clearer and easier procedures for money flow (budgeting transparency and procurement)

• Clearly identify who we are and our identity within the UH System
  o Develop a mission and vision that faculty/staff understand and buy-in to

• Infrastructure
  o Improve infrastructure by developing and maintaining more physical buildings

• Planning
  o Ensure support (money, people, technology) is provided for new initiatives

• Improve communication
  o Consultations on key policies need to be done face-to-face rather than relying on surveys
• Enhance support for faculty and student research opportunities
  o This should include start-up funds for junior faculty
  o Develop a mentoring system

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

**General points:**
- Too vague
  o It is hard to argue against the current goals as they are too broad and vague
    ▪ The goals should be specific – we will need to make choices about our direction
    ▪ The goals should give indication as to how they will be actionable

- Measurement and accountability
  o The goals need to give indication of how they will be measured
    ▪ Such measurement should not be just in dollars
  o It should be made clear who is accountable for action against each goal

- The word ‘quality’ should appear somewhere within the goals