LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE UH HILO DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 8TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the UH Hilo Diversity Committee on September 8th 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 and ethnic diversity that represents a unique demographic
  - Particularly of the student body. This helps to create a certain ‘personality’ for UH Hilo and means that students are exposed to differing points of view which enriches their educational experiences and social interactions at the university.
  - Faculty and staff are also diverse but this is in some areas more than others

- Small class sizes
  - Benefit students by having a more personal relationship with their professor/instructor

- Geographic location
  - Supporting education for Polynesian islands and Asia without having to go to the mainland
  - Hilo and the Big Island is a good place to raise a family which can attract students, faculty and staff to the university

- Economic engine for the community
  - The university is a large employer on the Big Island
  - Faculty, staff and students utilize businesses on the Big Island which helps contribute to the island’s overall economy

- Student friendly campus

- Good (sometimes) weather is an attraction for students, faculty and staff
• The university strives for excellence
  o Nursing was noted as an example

• Collegial faculty

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

• Infrastructure issues including:
  o Lack of parking
  o Lack of classrooms
  o Lack of student housing
  o Inadequate technology, media and equipment to support learning
  o Energy inefficient and non-sustainable buildings on campus
  o Low standards in grounds maintenance

• Lack of general resources
  o No money to recruit new faculty/staff

• Inadequate grant and research infrastructure, including:
  o No statistician to help faculty with research
  o More help required on how to apply for grant funding

• Not enough resources for research to compete with tier one institutions.
  o As faculty, generally, are being encouraged to publish more research articles there is
greater competition to submit journal articles. It is difficult currently for UH Hilo faculty
to compete against the well-funded tier one research institutions with the limited
resources (money and people support) available.

• Not enough classes offered for students in particular programs

• Administration and faculty relations
  o Senior administrators should involve and engage faculty more in wide-impacting policy
discussions and decisions like pre-built schedules
  o Demoralizing lack of trust between faculty and administrators

• Slow bureaucratic process

• The current organization of divisions at UH Hilo are outdated and do not reflect the growing
interdisciplinary nature of education, research and workforce needs.

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

• Money
• How to match growth with adequate resources

• How to support non-traditional students:
  o Number of single-parents increasing
    ▪ Need for an on-campus child-care center

• How to engage effectively with the community

• How to manage potential saturation of natural resources
  o That is, the more programs we have that utilize the island as a learning laboratory, the less natural learning sites there will be.

• Location
  o Elements of the local infrastructure need to be improved in order for UH Hilo to support excellent higher education provision.

• Accessibility
  o How to reach potential students and the broader community on the West-side of the Big Island

• Enrollment
  o If non-resident caps are increased then the potential impact on resident students needs to be managed carefully to ensure that opportunities for local students are not adversely affected.
  o An overall increase in students without an increase to faculty will result in larger class sizes meaning less direct interaction with faculty.

• SAT scores
  o UH Hilo apparently accepts students with lower SAT scores than other institutions, which means that some students are not adequately prepared for higher education study. UH Hilo should focus on helping these students to succeed where possible.

• How to effectively measure learning

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

• Continue and do more to celebrate the differences offered by UH Hilo’s diverse student body

• Seek to integrate the campus more with the local environment and local community – work towards a vision of making UH Hilo education an integral part of the community

• Improve infrastructure
  o Ensure that technology and equipment is current, adequately maintained, and equitably distributed between different colleges/units
Ensure that new buildings are environmentally sustainable and blend into the campus

- Ensure that students are given every opportunity to succeed by building capacity in areas like effective tutoring, as well as ensuring adequate infrastructure like classrooms.

- To help ensure student success, provide training and development funds and structures to help faculty improve teaching methods.

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

Specific points
- Goal 1 (maintain mix of liberal arts and professional programs) wording of ‘take full advantage...’ could be reworded to ‘preserve’ or ‘help maintain’

General points
- All six goals are relevant and appropriate to UH Hilo and appear to embody what the university currently strives for.

- Reference to research is currently missing and should be included

- Whatever new goals are developed should reflect the current activities of UH Hilo (e.g. graduate programs and research)