LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH
SEPTEMBER 8TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the Division of Research on September 8th 2010 as part of the 2010 Listening Tour to prepare for the development of the next UH Hilo Strategic Plan. Units invited to attend were: Division of Research office staff, RCUH Hilo office, Research Council and Graduate Council. The participants were largely from the UHH Research Council, the RCUH Hilo office and Graduate Council were unable to attend the meeting so alternative avenues will be sought to gain their input – either through the listening tour companion survey, or an additional listening tour meeting.

This 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 community relations
  - Particularly in regards to research activities at UH Hilo, for example positive community support for grants successfully acquired by the College of Pharmacy and other units
  - UH Hilo makes connections to and positively impacts on the local community through its academic programs, for example marine science, health studies, Hawaiian studies and pharmacy
  - To capitalize on this though, the university needs to maintain these relationships and put in place protocol to extend further out into the community
  - In general, there is a proactive and supportive involvement from the legislature/local politicians

- UH Hilo’s developmental base has grown enough to support research infrastructure

- Positive cross-college and cross-departmental collaborations are enhanced by our small size

- Partnership engagement between faculty and students

- The university’s graduate programs
  - Helps to distinguish UHH from the developing 4-year colleges across the state
• UH Hilo has been successful in attracting and acquiring external, non-traditional funding that is diverse in its base
  o The university’s strong cultural and ethnic diversity makes it an attractive place to invest in, along with its rural location – helps UH Hilo to stand out from the ‘mainstream’

• The university has space to grow into (i.e. land resources)

• Location
  o More affordable to come to UHH compared to Maui and Oahu
  o Many research agencies are located on the island that the university can and is partnering with (e.g. USDA, USGS, NELHA, NPS)
  o The university needs to continue to emphasize the unique aspects of the Big Island in comparison to the other islands to help attract faculty, staff and students to UHH.

• Ka Haka ‘Ula has given the university a strong cultural focus

• Charged with responsibility for activities atop Mauna Kea which helps facilitate student engagement with astronomy-based sciences

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

• Research infrastructure
  o Inadequate research support personnel
  o Inadequate research space
  o No developed, permanent research office
  o No graduate-assistantships program to support faculty in their research or provide students with valuable research and teaching experience. Provision of one at UH Hilo appears to be prevented by the UH System yet UH Manoa has one.

• General infrastructure
  o Lack of dedicated research facility, Lack of parking or restrictive parking policies that inhibit some interactions

• Lack of time to conduct research
  o High teaching load and the need to develop new courses do not allow time to conduct research
  o Inadequate general funds at the college-level to release new faculty so that they can establish their research career

• Even though management of Mauna Kea is a strength in terms of facilitating student engagement in astronomy, it means that the UH Hilo takes on a huge amount of public liability with little benefit to the university itself.

• UH Hilo Business Office
- Lack of a service-oriented philosophy which hinders and delays procurement

- The path and amounts of money transferred to colleges and departments for course buyouts is not transparent. It is often unclear if sufficient funds are transferred to cover the lecturer and where the difference in costs goes.
  - Another, related issue, is that given the university is located on a remote island that it is difficult to find people to replace faculty released for research
    - There is therefore a need to capacity-build in programs that do a lot of research. The university should examine different staffing models to try to address this issue.

- Graduate courses appear to be treated the same as undergraduate programs despite graduate programs being more intensive, with no associated reduction in teaching load for graduate-teaching faculty
  - UH Hilo is still applying an undergraduate BA model to the institution when it is now more than that with a growing number of graduate and professional programs.

- Combination of System rules and University unions can sometimes stifle creative solutions to the university's weaknesses

- Ineffective relationships within the UH System
  - Historical budgeting model is inequitable

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

- How to address all of the identified weaknesses

- How to grow sustainable revenue for the university
  - Actively seek alternative sources of funding

- Have UH Hilo recognized as a research center of expertise for some programs/areas
  - This could only be accomplished by a change in culture where, for example, teaching loads for research active faculty are reduced and other support infrastructure, such as graduate assistants, put in place

- Need to review UH Hilo’s indirect rates to see the range of rates and if they are optimized for the campus

- How to support appropriate growth
  - Create affordable student housing that is close to campus
  - Review the impact of UH Hilo subsidizing HawCC and the effect of shared facilities on the potential for growth of the university
  - Continue to pursue new buildings and devote a portion of space to research activities.
How to develop, improve and market a strong identity for the university

How to retain more faculty

How to build on the university’s unique strengths and not take them for granted

How to handle the political challenges of the future (e.g. new governor)

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

- Establish UH Hilo’s identity
  - Be a place where people want to come study and work
  - Offer all levels of courses

- Improve UH Hilo research infrastructure
  - Permanent research office (including space for the office)
  - More support staff to guide faculty through grant process
  - Technical support
  - Dedicated research spaces
  - Connect/collaborate with other universities (particularly well-known research universities) where UH Hilo could have something unique to offer (e.g. research on indigenous cultures, ecosystems, marine science)

- Seek sustainable revenues

- Maintain and maximize community involvement
  - Ensure that benefits of UH Hilo-led research/investments transfer to the community

- Improve student and faculty retention

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).