LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION TEAM
SEPTEMBER 1ST 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the UH Hilo Enrollment Management Implementation Team (EMIT) on September 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:

- Specific facilities and services
  - Financial aid
    - On the whole, good quality service provision
  - The new Student Life Center and its program staff
    - The SLC is an excellent source of employment for students, help recruitment as it provides many social and sporting activities for students. The students seem to ‘love it’.

- Location of the university and the benefits that it brings (e.g. environmental diversity, cultural diversity, living laboratory)

- Faculty quality
  - UH Hilo provides some excellent instruction and has some excellent faculty which is testament to that way in which UH Hilo students can stand-up against others from different universities
  - Linked to this is the fact that a high proportion of teaching is delivered by professors with high quality degrees which is a direct benefit to the students.
    - However, an increase in enrollment is forcing some units to rely more on instructors to deliver teaching.
  - However, it was noted that faculty teaching quality is variable between different units
    - One sign of quality faculty is other universities trying to hire/head-hunt them. This practice does not seem to be common at UH Hilo (with some notable exceptions in areas like English writers and geography)
    - It was also noted that assessment of ‘faculty quality’ should consider both teaching and research quality
• Generally small class sizes
  o Enables a one-to-one relationship between students and faculty/instructors
  o Faculty are accessible to students

• UH Hilo students
  o The university’s top students are exceptional and are competitive with other students from some of the top universities in the USA.

• Diverse student population
  o Represents the benefits of a global community and helps to improve in-class discussion as cultural differences help bring different perspectives and ideas

• Some outstanding academic programs
  o However, it was noted that there are other good programs at UH Hilo which have the potential to become recognized as outstanding with appropriate exposure (e.g. art and business)

• Accessibility of the Deans
  o The UH Hilo Deans are more accessible to faculty and students than Deans at other universities.

• Internal relationships
  o For the most part, there are positive relationships between the faculty, professional, clerical and auxiliary services staff across campus
  o There are forums for colleagues from student affairs and academic affairs to work together on issues and find solutions to campus-wide issue

• College of Arts and Sciences structure
  o The fact that CAS is one college with three divisions and not split into three different colleges means that it is nimble and able to respond to new opportunities together rather than having to operate across split boundaries.
    • However, the fact that CAS is structured in this way means that it is by far the largest college on campus which can cause some disparity compared to the other smaller colleges.

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

• Infrastructure
  o Student dissatisfaction with classrooms and technology
  o Lack of student and faculty housing
  o Lack of parking
  o Campus grounds need more attention and should look like ‘Imiloa’s grounds
As facilities have been expanded, they have not always been achieved with an expansion in support to run those facilities.

- Encouraging larger class sizes is not conducive to capitalize fully on the ‘living laboratory’ that UH Hilo is situated in.
  - E.g. There are only so many students that can go on a field trip in a van.

- Faculty and staff morale
  - There appears to be a lack of trust and poor communication across campus between faculty and staff.
    - This is perhaps reflective of low faculty and staff morale.
  - Lack of an appropriately funded and enacted merit/reward system means that UH Hilo is not seen to reward excellence which can also negatively impact on faculty retention and morale.

- There appears to be a general mindset and attitude that drives towards mediocrity rather than pushing for excellence.

- Course evaluations are ineffective in determining course and teaching quality.
  - The university needs to determine what constitutes good feedback and act upon it.

- Faculty diversity does not match student diversity (but it was noted that this situation is changing for the positive).

- Lack of a shared vision or direction for the university means that there are divergent opinions on ‘who we are’ and where we are going.

- Lack of clear policies, procedures and processes for faculty, staff and students
  - It was noted however that some documented policies, procedures and processes do exist but that they are not always clearly and actively communicated to those who may find them useful.

- Related to the point above is that some students report having to do a lot of running around on campus to get things done (e.g. having to see a number of different people before having an issue resolved).
  - The university needs to focus on providing high quality front-line/customer-service type support to its students.

- Insufficient monetary resources
  - Historically at UH Hilo, budgets have driven program developments and academic priorities whereas it should be the other way around. A related issue is that then the person who ‘holds the purse strings’ seems to hold the most power.

- Leadership
  - Lack of management training for all levels of leadership.
- People are promoted into leadership roles and are generally excellent academicians but have little or no training in management and leadership skills to help prepare them to undertake their new responsibilities effectively
  - Executive leadership team is not as strong as it could be (Chancellor Straney is exempt from this observation as he has only recently joined UH Hilo)
  - Could be more effective in identifying, cultivating and recruiting ‘good’ leaders

- There has been an expansion of graduate programs without an associated increase in resources
  - This serves to erode the undergraduate core

**Challenges for UH Hilo**

The group identified the following as challenges for UH Hilo:

- How to work effectively with the UH System
  - Currently, internal UH System politics somewhat inhibit effective working across the System

- Competition from within the system and outside

- How to improve internal communication

- Enrollment management challenges:
  - How to address and plan for the expected national decrease in High School graduates over time
  - How to deal with competition from within and outside of the UH System
    - Other 4-year colleges have been and are being developed which means there is much more competition for both students and resources.
    - UH Hilo is losing students to the community colleges
  - Increased numbers of students overall
    - But possibly a decrease because of competition
  - Decline in lower division enrollment and increase in upper division enrollment in some colleges
    - This could be because more students (local students especially) are seeking their initial higher education at a community college. In that regard, the university needs to consider its relationship with Hawaii Community College and to determine how it is different.
    - This could impact on hiring patterns as some colleges depend on lower division enrollment to employ faculty, however this effect will likely be uneven across different programs.
    - The university needs to also consider the impact of this trend on its 6 year graduation rate

- The State budget and its impact on UH Hilo financial resources

- Limited infrastructure to support growth
Location
- Although a strength in many ways, the remote location of UH Hilo in the State of Hawaii and in a comparably small town can cause difficulties for people, especially faculty and staff, relocating here. It can be particularly difficult for spouses to settle and find employment which in turn can put pressure on the faculty/staff member.

Distance learning
- The university’s future position regarding distance learning is unclear and needs to be defined. The impact of the university’s current distance learning programs is not clear.

How to respond to the expectations of the new generation of technologically advanced students

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

- Improve UH Hilo’s internal working environment
  - Improve faculty morale. Suggestions on steps to achieve this included:
    - Develop and initiate effective and meaningful post-tenure review
    - Introduce a Faculty Development Fund that can be used to develop and enhance areas like teaching skills
  - Cultivate an environment of accountability, productivity and excellence
    - Will need to work effectively with the unions to help achieve this

- Improve efficiency at the university by reducing bureaucracy at all levels

- Clarify UH Hilo’s identity by developing a clear vision for its future direction
  - Within this, it was suggested that the university should try to identify ‘centers of excellence’ or key areas that it will seek to excel in. It was however noted that this could cause marginalize other programs and therefore has the potential to cause conflicts within faculty if some programs are demonstrably favored over others.

- Food and drink
  - Improve the variety of both the food available and the places where food and drink can be purchased. This is in recognition that food and drink is an experience where people get together, hang-out and relax rather than just a means to gaining nourishment.

- Infrastructure
  - Improve and increase student housing
  - At the least, maintain (in terms of keep working) the university’s current technological infrastructure.

- Establish priorities and stick to them
  - Honor what priorities and goals come out of the new strategic plan
• Seek to receive a more equitable share of UH System funding
  o Note that although UH Manoa’s student enrollment has decreased over the past years their budget does not appear to have been altered.

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

Specific points:
• There is no clear difference between goals 1 (maintain mix of liberal arts and professional programs) and 2 (continue to provide liberal arts and professional programs)
• Goal 4 (obtain sufficient resources) would gain greater emphasis if combined with goals 1 and 2
• Goal 6 (more effective organization) needs to explicitly reflect faculty and staff morale issues

General points:
• The current goals are too broad-based
  o They offer no clear direction and as a result suggest that nothing is beyond their remit (‘nothing to say ‘no’ to’)
• There are too many goals (6) at present – there should be fewer but more focused goals in the next strategic plan
  o The strategic plan should not seek to describe everything we do but should provide clear direction and priorities for focused effort over the years ahead.
• The resulting strategic plan should include measurable outcomes attached to the strategies for each goal. These measurable outcomes should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound
• Resources should be attached to the strategic goals so that budget planning is driven by the strategic plan and there are no unfunded mandates.
• Suggestion for new goals:
  o to ensure that the student experience is as memorable and extraordinary as possible
  o ‘sustainability’ should feature in any new goals