LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH THE UH HILO GRADUATE COUNCIL  
OCTOBER 19TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with the UH Hilo Graduate Council 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**
  - Environment of the Big Island is a benefit for particular programs
  - Being in the center of the Pacific means we can recruit from various areas – East and West
  - Cultural location means that UH Hilo has developed as a world-leading center in indigenous language revitalization
  - The university has developed good research partnerships with other federal and state agencies on the island (e.g. conservation biology)

- **UH Hilo’s small size**
  - Enables innovative, interdisciplinary and collegial work
  - Means that the university can be more responsive to change/capitalizing on opportunities than larger institutions
  - The university has the potential for growth (something that UH Manoa does not have) given its vast land resources

- **Attention to student learning and outcomes at the graduate level**
  - This is perhaps influenced by UH Hilo’s teaching institution roots
  - However, it was noted that such practice is inconsistent across the university

- **The graduate council**
  - The group is unique in its composition and operates effectively

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

- **Mission**
Disagreement within the university about how graduate programs (and research) fit with the current mission of UH Hilo as a primarily undergraduate/professional program liberal arts university.

- It was noted that the disagreement may primarily be caused by the fact that there are limited resources and both graduate and undergraduate programs are funded by, and therefore compete for, the same pot of money. If both were adequately funded then this may resolve some of the disagreement. However it was also noted that others are concerned more generally that further development of graduate programs will take the university away from its undergraduate roots.

- Lack of support for graduate programs at all levels
  - Staffing
  - Money
  - Administrative structure
    - There is no formal ‘graduate division’ but all the necessary formal approval is there. It currently operates virtually,
    - There is a differential amount of work for faculty who teach graduate programs compared to those who teach undergraduate programs, but no distinction is made. There is no extra credit for faculty who teach graduate programs or who advise graduate students. There is no incentive to serve on thesis committees
  - No teaching assistantships, internal fellowships or research assistantships for graduate students

- Academic planning
  - Some graduate programs do not have student critical mass to justify teaching the class
    - However, it was noted that this is a ‘chicken and egg’ situation where there are not enough resources to recruit graduate students into graduate programs
  - Lack of clarity in terms of the curriculum – what programs need to be developed, maintained and sunset?
  - Lack of link between budget and planning

- Competition for resources
  - In this context, resources includes financial, personnel and facility resources
  - Internally, there is competition between departments and between undergraduate and graduate programs

- Location
  - The geographical location of the Big Island is isolating which makes it difficult to recruit out-of-state students and post-docs.

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

- How to maintain excellent undergraduate education, whilst developing graduate education
  - Graduate programs require standards for assessment
  - Develop bridging programs to help better prepare students to undertake graduate studies
Help students understand during their undergraduate studies, what would be required of them during their graduate studies so that their expectations are managed/calibrated. This could be offered as a general training package at the undergraduate level as many skills required for graduate study are transferable skills regardless of the subject of study.

- How to improve faculty/staff morale
  - For new faculty, provide start-up to help them begin their research career – this could be in-kind or in dollars (this currently occurs in some areas of the university but the practice is uneven)

- How to improve faculty retention
  - UH Hilo seems to lose a lot of faculty in the first two-years. There should be an evaluation as to why people leave – is it the university’s isolation? Morale issues?

- How to extend opportunities for research involvement to more undergraduates
  - This requires financial and personnel support to achieve

- Improve conflict resolution
  - At the moment people seem ‘mad at each other’
    - An ombudsman-type office would be helpful to offer a mediation service

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

- Clarify UH Hilo’s mission
  - Particularly with regards to the development of graduate programs
  - Ensure that the renewed mission has faculty buy-in

- Develop a clear structure for a graduate division
  - ‘Take the division ‘from virtual to real’
  - Ensure that the division is integrated effectively into the university
    - Ensure that a physical space is indentified and monetary and personnel resources allocated

- Resolve the issue of differential workloads for undergraduate and graduate teaching faculty

- Support students
  - Enable opportunities for teaching assistants

- Infrastructure
  - Ensure sufficient infrastructure (e.g. classrooms, labs) is available to accommodate all students – undergraduate, graduate and research

- Streamline bureaucratic processes and procedures
Appropriateness of the Current UHH Strategic Goals
The group discussed the current UHH strategic goals and made the following comments:

**General points:**
- The goals lack metrics
- There needs to be mention of graduate programs
- The goals are too vague – they need to be more specific

**Goal specific points:**
- Goal 1 – ‘well-rounded mix of undergraduate and professional programs’. Has that now changed?
  - We could have well-rounded undergraduate programs and centers of excellence for graduate programs
- Goal 6 – unfocussed, but critical. There needs to be a focus on the employees of the university to deliver education effectively to our students
  - We need to improve morale overall and perhaps re-evaluate the current college structure and who reports to who