LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH HUI KA UA  
OCTOBER 22ND 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with Hui Ka Ua on October 22nd 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:

- Diversity of the student body
  - UH Hilo’s diverse student body enables cultural interaction facilitating student understanding of different background and perspectives

- Unique cultural identity
  - The university identifies with and should continue to embrace its host culture

- Location
  - Situated between East and West which means the university is attractive to students from different parts of the world.
  - UH Hilo is perhaps preferable than UH Manoa for some pacific island students who may feel more comfortable in the university’s semi-rural location
    - This offers an opportunity for UH Hilo to partner more with community colleges on the other pacific islands to help recruit students who wish to engage in 2+2 programs.
  - The university’s location also means that students have access to experiential learning – particularly in science programs where the island offers a ‘learning laboratory’

- Academic programs offered
  - The university offers many different programs for its comparatively small size, offering good choice for local and out-of-state students.
  - Many of UH Hilo’s programs are able to capitalize on the university’s location e.g. volcanology, marine science, astronomy, pharmacy

- Some outstanding faculty
  - Generally, the university’s faculty have a caring attitude towards students
• Strong community support
  o The university’s comparatively small programs makes it easier to partner with community groups (e.g. teacher education program)
  o The university needs to leverage this support more. It already has a big economic and social impact on Hilo and the Big Island but it has tremendous potential to do even more and become a leading driving force
    ▪ The administration should work more closely with the local council, businesses and the community to help develop Hilo into a college-town. This should represent a partnership with greater depth and breadth than is currently in place.

• Ability to attract funding
  o UH Hilo is ranked 3rd in the nation for National Science Foundation funding by faculty.
    ▪ Important messages like this that demonstrate the university’s good work need to get out – be better communicated internally and externally.
  o The university has been successful in obtaining CIP (capital improvement projects) funding for large-scale infrastructure such as the new Pharmacy and College of Hawaiian Language buildings.

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

• General lack of resources
  o Many of the weaknesses that follow below are the product of a general lack of resources that means, for example, that not enough support staff can be hired; employees are unable to do their jobs effectively; and that the university’s infrastructure has been unable to keep up with its growth

• Infrastructure
  o Not enough attention has been paid to the development of the university’s infrastructure (physical and personnel) to keep pace with its growth.
    ▪ Physical - the university is lacking in areas such as student housing, function space and gathering places for students
      • To address the lack of student gathering places, UH Hilo should work more closely with local businesses to develop commercial activity around campus – within the broader context of helping to build a college-town feel/infrastructure
    ▪ Physical – the university’s physical appearance is embarrassing in some areas. It not appear to be looked after (e.g. the grounds) or maintained.
    ▪ Personnel – too few support staff to enable activities of the university to run smoothly

• UH System
  o Historical budgeting model has meant that UH Hilo, which has seen a growth in student numbers, has lost out to UH Manoa, which has seen a decline in student numbers. Therefore, more has been attributed to UH Manoa per student head than to UH Hilo.
• We are in some ways a victim of our own success
  ○ It may be better to go it alone and operate outside of the System as a Hawaii State University

• Community support has not been nurtured
  ○ The university needs to develop more of a two-way partnership with the community – recognizing that administrators, students, faculty and staff come and go, but the community is a constant for the university
  ○ Generally, faculty and staff do not appear to be very involved in community projects or sit on community committees/boards
    ▪ It was noted that faculty are perhaps implicitly discouraged from doing so as the notion of ‘service’ during tenure is not split between professional (university) service and community service. At present, it seems that professional service counts more in tenure reviews than community service. Distinguishing ‘service’; then by professional and community with equal weight applied to both may encourage more faculty to become engaged with the Big Island community.

• Poor attrition rate
  ○ We are missing resources in freshman programs (the year when most drop-out or leave) and student support to help improve this.
  ○ Where we do have resources, they do not seem to be directed to that which we market ourselves on – i.e. personalized attention and small class sizes

• Poor graduation rate
  ○ Our 6-year graduation rate is currently around 35%. However, it was noted that this statistic is misleading as it counts only first-time freshman. Our graduation rate including transfer students is around 80%

• Lack of priorities
  ○ Lack of priorities to guide resource allocation and lack of process or procedure to enable prioritization to take place

• UH Hilo leadership
  ○ Leadership has not been strong
  ○ The change needs to be led by the Chancellor and filter down from the top

• Low faculty and staff morale
  ○ It is further weakened when resources cannot be allocated to make the changes that are necessary following feedback elicited

• Lack of collaborative spirit
  ○ Lack of community-feel on campus – too much division
  ○ The university lacks collaborative spirit in that faculty and staff appear fragmented and feel that they have to fight for resources – seeing funding as a ‘zero-sum’ game
People who sit on high-level meetings do not seem to see the bigger-picture of working towards the university’s greater good. There seems to be no shared sacrifice when it comes to resources. There needs to be a system in place to facilitate the willingness to sacrifice so each area will eventually get the support/resources necessary to get its job done.

- No merit system for faculty or staff
  - Faculty should be encouraged to engage more with students and be rewarded for it.
  - Staff should be encouraged to collaborate and cooperate with one another within the same department and with other departments and be rewarded for it.

- Focus on NSF (National Science Foundation) funding implicitly discourages faculty from seeking funding for applied research because applied research is not as well rewarded as peer research.
  - Involvement in applied research is particularly beneficial for students who can identify with its practical applications.

- Weak athletics department
  - Lack of faculty and staff attendance at UH Hilo athletics events
  - A stronger athletics department may encourage even greater support from the community and improve school spirit for students.

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

- How to attract and sustain adequate resource levels to enable the university undertake its activities effectively?

- How to encourage greater faculty involvement in the community?
  - Clarify the ‘service’ requirement for tenure by distinguishing between ‘internal’ UH Hilo service and ‘external’ community/student centered service.

- How to ensure ‘buy-in’ to the university’s next strategic plan?

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

- Raise out-of-state tuition to help increase revenue

- Implement the strategic plan
  - Perhaps have a dedicated group or committee that oversees and monitors implementation across the campus and ensure that a community member is part of such a group.

- Build more student housing – this is urgent given UH Hilo’s growth
• Improve strategic management of enrollment

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

**General points:**
• In general, the goals are broad and ambiguous
  o There is nothing to disagree with about them, but their meaning is not clear
  o More specific goals would be something like ‘Improve UH Hilo’s attrition rate…’ or ‘By 2015, increase enrollment to X’

**Specific points:**
• Goal 3 – this goal seems almost redundant and what college would not want to ‘build a learning environment that facilitates student development and success’?

• Goal 5 – this goal is worded like it expected that opportunities for ‘dynamic community involvement’ will just come our way, rather than us actively pursuing and developing such engagement.

• Goal 6 – it’s not clear what this goal means – it is vague