LISTENING TOUR 2010: MEETING WITH UH HILO OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT/UH FOUNDATION
JUNE 24TH 2010

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with UH Hilo Office of Development/UH Foundation staff on June 24th 2010 as part of the 2010 Listening Tour to prepare for the development of the next UH Hilo Strategic Plan. 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
  - Geographically
  - Culturally
  The island as a learning laboratory
    - Astronomy – the presence of the telescopes on Mauna Kea puts the university in a unique position to interact and partner with leaders in the field. Potential for world-leading research to put UH Hilo ‘on the map’
    - Marine Science
    - Volcanology
    - Indigenous language revitalization
    - Geology
  The unique location of UHH gives the opportunity to develop academic programs around the Big Island’s geographic/environmental and cultural strengths.

- Diversity
  The diversity of UH Hilo’s students and the surrounding community help make the university unique. Means the university is able to play an important role in cultural revitalization and serve as a model for others to follow in how to integrate culture and science. Particularly in relation to key program areas such as:
  In relation to key programs the group also noted that the College of Pharmacy is unique as the only pharmacy program in the Pacific region.

- Community sense of pride in the university
  - Only 4-year University on the island so UHH is very much “the hometown university.”
  - Rapid growth of the university has contributed to a sense of momentum and pride, with more high school students thinking of UH Hilo as an option for their future education. Noted that it is important to continue with this momentum.
Capitalize on strengths

- Improve public relations, advertising, marketing and branding
  - ‘Tell our story’ – more actively, consistently and effectively promote the success of UH Hilo
  - Improve the website and ensure consistency of branding across all colleges
  - Leverage UHH’s unique attributes to gain more visibility in the community and beyond
  - Outreach to local high schools, by for example, encouraging school trips to the university and interaction with faculty/students

- Engage the community more
  - Connect UHH more to the cultural aspects of the Big Island and its community
  - Conduct more community outreach through, for example, units like ‘Imiloa

- Develop specific graduate programs to capitalize on the university’s unique location

Weaknesses of UH Hilo

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

- Marketing, branding and public relations
  - UHH is not effective at conveying what the university is about and promoting what it is doing – telling a good story
  - Specifically missing an opportunity to engage UHH alumni more
  - Community involvement could be improved, especially in terms of making UHH more accessible to the local population which it serves. At the moment lack of parking on-site creates a physical barrier and a perception that the university is difficult to access.

- Sense of second-class citizenship within the UH System
  - Living in the shadow of UH Manoa
  - Perception that UHH does not get its ‘fair share’ from the System
  - Too much time devoted to discussions re what UH Manoa gets and UHH does not get

- Lack of physical presence on the West side of the island
  - Community on Kona side has ‘no reason to care’ about UHH
  - West Hawaii community members state a reluctance to donate to UHH without evidence that UHH is serving the entire Big Island community; without a clear presence across the island it is difficult to clearly demonstrate that

- Poor retention and graduation rate
  - Particular issue when trying to recruit financial donors for UHH. Sometimes a student will receive a scholarship from a donor and then drop out or transfer shortly afterwards

- Lack of housing
  - Particularly has an impact for the West side of the island as there is limited housing at UHH
How to address weaknesses

- Have greater autonomy from the UH System in terms of greater decision making powers
  o Not necessarily to remove UH from the System completely

- Invest in more professional marketing, branding and public relations activities to promote better public engagement

- Develop physical presence on the West side of the island

Challenges for UH Hilo

The group identified the following as challenges for UH Hilo:

- Retaining dynamic faculty
  o Possible reasons for faculty leaving include lack of satisfaction with opportunities for spouses at UH/Big Island, dissatisfaction with school system for their children, distance from family/support network, etc.

- Recovery from the global economic recession

- How to develop effective marketing, branding and public relations activities – to ‘fix the story telling engine’

How to respond to Challenges

- Expand target financial donor audience to include mainland and international

- Leader(s) who can articulate a clear and consistent vision for UHH and demonstrate the ability to execute that vision.

Priorities

The group identified the following priorities for UH Hilo:

- Marketing, branding and public relations
  o Including greater and more effective community outreach in relation to both up-and-coming students from local high schools, and making and nurturing friendships with the broader community

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs
  o Building on the unique geographic strengths of UHH and existing strong undergraduate programs in these areas
  o Particularly moving into the field of green technologies/sustainable energy sources which represents an opportunity to link with global companies who are investing a lot of money in this area

- Greater investment in development staffing to help increase giving from across the island and beyond
Appropriateness of the Current UHH Strategic Goals
The group discussed the current UHH strategic goals and made the following comments:

- The current goals are too wordy; difficult to see at a glance exactly what the crux of each one is
- Goal 1 and 2 seem to be directed towards the same issue, however it is unclear if Goal 2 is referring to quality control
- Goals 3 and 5 remain particularly important

Questions raised by the group
No additional comments or questions were raised by the group.