

May 24, 2013

Seri Luangphinit
Accreditation Liaison Officer
University of Hawaii, Hilo
200 West Kawili Street
Hilo, CA 96720

Dear Seri:

At its meeting by conference call on April 29, 2013, a panel of the Retention and Graduation Committee (RGC) considered the Retention, Graduation, and Time-to-Degree data templates, institutional narrative, and supporting materials submitted by University of Hawaii, Hilo (UHH) on April 5, 2013. The panel and I would like to thank you, Susan Brown, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Mitch Anderson, Chair of Academic Policy, Faculty Congress, Todd Belt, Chair of General Education, Faculty Congress, and Mason Kuo, Institutional Researcher for participating in the call and giving the reviewers an opportunity to discuss your data. The conversation was informative and helped the panelists better understand UHH's student success results, context, capacity, challenges and initiatives to improve and/or ensure student success.

The institution's narrative followed the retention and graduation review framework outlined in the WASC handbook and was thoughtful and well presented. The templates were completed accurately. Supporting materials were professional and relevant. The panel commends UHH for the great care and thoroughness evident in preparing your materials.

The panel commends the institution for using categories to disaggregate student data that is relevant and meaningful for you, particularly by residency status. The institution situates itself effectively in relation to challenges faced by particular student sub-populations. The panel also commends the institution for your selection of peers. Finally, the panel commends you for calculating time-to-degree data out to the first decimal instead of rounding up or down to the full year, because it provides more useful data.

As you elaborated in the report, the panel concurs that your first year retention rates are troubling. Similarly, the panel agrees that your graduation rates are low. Your narrative and conversation with the panelists during the call provided a thoughtful examination of the low rates, e.g. that you are investigating National Clearinghouse data to assess student success among students who transfer out of UHH; students may be treating UHH like a community college or otherwise are using UHH as a stepping stone to another institution. The panel acknowledges that graduation rates are moving in a positive direction and concludes that your strategies to improve student success rates seem targeted and appropriate.

The panel recommends that you work more closely with peer institutions to secure more data for comparisons. They acknowledge the challenges inherent from inconsistencies between the way the University of Hawaii system and WASC calculate student success data. The panel urges the institution to increase attention on the importance of adequate institutional research staffing.

After extensive discussion of UHH's retention, graduation and time to degree data, narrative and supporting documents, the panel decided to:

1. Receive the Retention, Graduation, and Time-to-Degree data templates, institutional narrative, and supporting materials;
2. Endorse UHH to include updates in retention and graduation data and efforts to improve those data in the institutional report;
3. Report on results from student success strategies and initiatives included in your appendices at the time of your accreditation visit.

The panel uses a rubric to assess and reflect their conclusions about UHH's capacity for monitoring and understanding retention, graduation, and time-to-degree data:

Initial	Emerging	Developed	Highly Developed
Partially completed templates or did not complete them for all groups. Narrative does not reflect an understanding and assessment of the data.	Completed templates properly for all groups, but narrative does not fully reflect an understanding and assessment of the data.	Completed templates properly and narrative provides a full albeit basic understanding and assessment of the data.	Completed templates properly and contextualization in narrative thoroughly reflects a deeper understanding and assessment of the data.
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The panel's decision to situation UHH on the rubric between emerging and developed reflects their concerns that the institution has sufficient institutional staff to sustain the kind of capacity needed for this work.

The panel would like to affirm the hard work and important steps UHH has taken to address these issues to this point. I wish you and UHH every success.

Sincerely,

Maureen Maloney

Maureen A. Maloney
Vice President

cc: Jo Volkert, SFSU
Andrew K. Smith, UCB
Dick Osborn, WASC