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PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ralph A. Wolff

March 3, 2010

Rose Tseng
Chancellor
University of Hawaii at Hilo
200 West Kawili Street
Hilo, HI 96720-4091

Dear Chancellor Tseng:

At its meeting on February 17-19, 2010, the Commission considered the report of the WASC team that conducted a Special Visit to the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UH Hilo) on October 14-15, 2009. The Commission also had access to the Special Visit report prepared by the University prior to the visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit and team report with Vice Chancellor Phil Castille.

Following the completion of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) in spring 2004, the Commission made a number of recommendations for institutional engagement and improvement at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and called for a Special Visit in spring 2008 to review the institution's progress in these areas. These recommendations included, among others, the need to ensure that the University's governance structures were aligned with and served the needs of the institution, especially as regards the two-tiered (college- and university-level) governance system. A subsequent substantive change approval also required a review of the institution's newly-established doctoral program in Hawaiian and Indigenous Languages and Culture Revitalization (HILCR).

The team that conducted the Special Visit to UH Hilo in March 2008 continued to find problems with the University's two-tiered governance system and raised some serious concerns about the doctoral program. These problems and concerns led the Commission, in its June 30, 2008 action letter, to notify the institution that it was out of compliance with CFRs 1.3, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 3.8, 3.10, and 3.11 and to call for another Special Visit in fall 2009 to give the institution "one final opportunity to return to compliance." Reflecting this finding, the commission also issued a formal Notice of Concern.

In accepting the 2009 Special Visit team report, the Commission endorsed the findings and recommendations of the team and urged UH Hilo to give them full consideration. The Commission also highlighted several areas for the institution to address during its next regularly-scheduled accreditation visits.

Institutional Governance and Decision Making. In June 2008, the Commission found that UH Hilo's organizational structures and decision-making processes did not clearly and formally differentiate the roles and responsibilities of the Cabinet, the

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Deans, the Faculty Congress, and the College Senates. The Commission concluded that the University was “out of compliance with Standard 3 of the WASC *Handbook of Accreditation*” and needed to immediately address these issues to return to compliance.

The 2009 Special Visit team found that the University had made significant positive changes to respond to Commission concerns. Specifically, governance structures and decision-making processes had been changed to clarify and institutionalize the predominant roles of the university-wide Faculty Congress and the university-wide Graduate Council, and procedures had been established for the codification of policies. Additionally, through the establishment of a campus-wide Curriculum Review Committee, a university-level curriculum review and approval process had been created. The University had also taken steps to clarify the roles of the deans in academic and fiscal matters. The team noted that a Deans Council, established in August 2008, now makes recommendations to the vice chancellor for academic affairs on both academic and fiscal issues. The team also noted that “[i]n addition to clarifying the role of the deans, the University has also more clearly articulated the decision-making roles of administrators and consultation rights of faculty.”

The team was impressed with all these campus actions, but called for attention to the implementation of the new process in line with the recommendations of the campus Task Force on Shared Governance. It also noted the need for resources to provide for oversight of curriculum planning and development, and appropriate administrative oversight of graduate education.

The Commission commends the University for the improvements that it has made in institutional governance and decision making, and concurs with the team’s recommendations. It also notes that since the new university-wide curriculum review and approval process had not yet been implemented when the Special Visit team visited the campus in October 2009, it will be essential for the institution to demonstrate the effectiveness of this process during the next comprehensive review. Based on the team’s findings, the Commission finds that the University has now come into compliance with the issues cited under Standard 3.

Doctorate in Hawaiian and Indigenous Languages and Culture Revitalization. In its June 2008 action letter, the Commission expressed “serious concerns about the quality and integrity of the HILCR doctorate.” It indicated that “the program, and the University’s oversight of it, do not presently meet the expectations of CFRs 1.8, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.7.”

The October 2009 Special Visit team found significant improvement. It commended the University for clarifying the admissions requirements for the Ph.D., for clearly differentiating the M.A. and Ph.D. curricula, for building faculty capacity in the entire program, and for developing a conflict of interest policy covering individuals who serve simultaneously as students and faculty in the program. The team noted with approval that no new students (after the first cohort) had been admitted to the doctoral program while these concerns were being dealt with and that it is not anticipated that a new cohort will be admitted until 2012. It also commented positively on the clarifications in the role of the university-wide Graduate Council and the establishment of a new campus-wide Curriculum Review Committee with clearly delineated responsibilities for overseeing curricular quality and integrity. Given these actions, the Commission has reason to

be optimistic that the HILCR doctorate, once reestablished with a new cohort of students, will attain “the highest standards of quality and integrity...in order to ensure program credibility and viability,” as called for in the Commission’s June 2008 action letter.

The Commission also concurs with the team’s recommendations that demonstrated assessment of student learning, with data, analysis, and results, continue to occur within the HILCR College and that there be a careful review of the doctoral program within the context of the next scheduled Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) and Educational Effectiveness Review visits. The Commission agrees with the Special Visit team that many of the plans being put in place to ensure continued integrity and viability “can only be assessed as the program again begins to admit doctoral students.” The steps taken by the University satisfactorily respond to the concerns cited by the Commission under Standards 1 and 2.

Planning and Enrollment Management and Educational Effectiveness. Though technically not a part of the Special Visit, the visiting team chose to comment on UH Hilo’s endeavors in regard to planning and enrollment management, and educational effectiveness. It commended the work of the University’s Enrollment Management Implementation Team and recommended focused attention on the implementation of the newly-developed enrollment planning and management processes, as well as the alignment of recruitment and retention with the University’s strategic priorities and performance measures. It also called upon the University administration to “provide leadership for further development of programmatic student outcomes assessment.” Since successful retention endeavors and the demonstration of enhanced educational effectiveness are so integral to the accreditation goals of WASC, the Commission wholeheartedly endorses these recommendations and concurs that evidence of their implementation should be a major focus of the next CPR and EER.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the report of the Special Visit team and continue the accreditation of the University of Hawaii at Hilo.
2. Reschedule the next Capacity and Preparatory Review for fall 2013 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for spring 2015. The Institutional Proposal will be due in fall 2011.

The Commission also acknowledges your impending retirement after a distinguished tenure as chancellor of UH Hilo and the significant development of the campus under your leadership. It requests that, once a new chancellor has been installed, there be a meeting between him or her and WASC staff to discuss the issues raised in this letter and the forthcoming WASC review cycle.

In accordance with Commission policy, copies of this letter will be sent to President M.R.C. Greenwood and the chair of the University of Hawaii Board of Regents in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution’s response to the specific issues identified in them.

In closing, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our process. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ralph" being the most prominent.

Ralph A. Wolff
President and Executive Director

RW/aa

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter, Commission Chair
Howard Karr, UH Board of Regents Chair
M.R.C. Greenwood, UH President
April Komenaka, ALO
Members of the Team
Richard Giardina