UH HILO
COUNSELOR STUDY

December 2003

Prepared for
UH Hilo
(10254-406693)

Prepared by
QMark Research & Polling
BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

University of Hawaii at Hilo has contracted QMark Research & Polling to conduct a quantitative study in the form of telephone interviews conducted from November 14, 2003 thru December 2, 2003.

28 surveys with Oahu high school counselors were completed and accounted for in the study.

Respondents were screened to ensure they are a counselor with direct contact with college bound students.

The primary objectives of the research are:

- To gain insight into how often Oahu counselors recommend UH Hilo to students.

- To understand counselors' perceptions of UH Hilo.

- To determine an appropriate and effective method of contact UH Hilo should have with counselors on Oahu.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Top of Mind Image of UH Hilo
- Rural location, lack of activities
- Strong special programs (Hawaiian Studies, Agricultural, Marine Biology and Astronomy programs)
- Smaller class sizes
- Outstanding faculty and staff

Participants strongly agree with these statements:
- UH Hilo has a strong undergraduate curriculum.
- UH Hilo's niche is the small liberal arts type campus in the State of Hawaii.
- UH Hilo prepares students well for professional employment.

Strengths of UH Hilo
- Smaller class sizes
- Commitment of faculty
- Specific programs such as Hawaiian Studies and the Sciences.

Weaknesses of UH Hilo
- Reputation is not as strong as UH Manoa
- Location of campus limits activities and transportation
- Transfer of credits process is difficult

Recommending UH Hilo
- Counselors do help students on college related decisions. The top factors influencing student’ decisions are:
  - Cost
  - Location
  - Academic programs
  - Reputation of school
  - Financial Aid
  - Campus environment
- Counselors do recommend UH Hilo to students, but only once in a while.

Selling Factors of UH Hilo
- Lower cost than UH Manoa and mainland institutions
- Close to home but far enough away to gain the college experience
- Special programs that are unique to UH Hilo
- Smaller class sizes resulting in more personal attention from professors for the student
Marketing Efforts

- Use success in special programs to bolster image of general liberal arts programs.
- Promote the “away from home experience” being a lower cost option than going to the mainland.
- Invite counselors to tour campus and meet faculty. It is easier to sell something you are knowledgeable in.
- Continue recruiter efforts and update materials to include major selling points.
- Be sure to give good attention to liberal arts programs.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PERCEPTIONS OF UH HILO
Participants were asked what they feel the strengths of UH Hilo are based on their own knowledge of the school. The smaller class sizes, commitment of faculty and specific programs such as Hawaiian Studies and Sciences were mentioned by many participants as being UH Hilo's strongest assets.

"Marine Biology, Astronomy, Volcanology, Hawaiian Studies and Tropical Agriculture."

"Small size community, professors are challenging."

"Size, science, Hawaiian Studies programs, Marine Biology and Agriculture."

"The size-smaller than UH Manoa and Ag programs are good."

"That they have a great Marine Science program and Hawaiian program and Astronomy program."

"The smallness of the school which is great for interpersonal attention. Science program is great, also Marine Biology and Volcanology. Oh yes, they also have a good Hawaiian Studies program."

"I think the small class size is great. Better attention from teachers. The one-on-one."

UH Hilo's strongest programs based on history and natural environment of the Big Island. These programs make UH Hilo unique to any other school, including UH Manoa. Participants say they would promote UH Hilo to students who are interested in majoring in Hawaiian Studies or the Sciences.

"Ocean Science, Volcanology, and Hawaiian Studies are better than UH Manoa."

"The best Astronomy program in the State. Great professors in the Tropical Agriculture program. No one else in the State offers."

"What UH Manoa doesn't offer like Marine Biology and Astronomy."

"They offer Agriculture classes that are not offered elsewhere."
"Better focus than UH Manoa with Hawaiian Studies, more hands-on tropical agriculture."

"Animal Science which has a great rural area to work on. The Arts program and Marine Science program according to what I've heard is excellent."

"Astronomy has observatories and Geology has the Volcanoes National Park. Also a very strong computer studies program, Tropical Agricultural and Hawaiian Studies program."

Participants feel the major weaknesses of UH Hilo have to do with its reputation and location. Many participants feel UH Hilo is not as prestigious as UH Manoa and has a narrow selection of programs when compared to UH Manoa. In addition, UH Hilo’s isolated location in a rural environment can be a drawback for many students since there is a lack of social activities.

"That it's in a small town, not much for students to do."

"Nothing to do there."

"In the past, it used to be known as a party school."

"Size too small for some. No activities."

"Small town atmosphere."

"Not as well known as UH Manoa."

"In terms of majors, they would probably have less to offer than UH Manoa."

"Students say that there's not much to do there."

A few participants also mention the dorm facilities, transfer credits and slow response time as being weaknesses of UH Hilo.

When asked which programs at UH Hilo are considered to be weakest, almost all participants say they do not know.
Participants were presented with a number of statements concerning UH Hilo and asked for their perceptions using a 4 point scale 4=strongly agree, 3=somewhat agree, 2=disagree somewhat and 1=disagree strongly. The following table displays the mean ratings for each statement as well as shows the number of counselors who “strongly agreed” or “strongly disagreed” with each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>&quot;Strongly Agree&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Strongly Disagree&quot;</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo has a strong undergraduate curriculum.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo's niche is the small liberal arts type campus in the State of Hawaii.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo prepares students well for professional employment.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo prepares students well for graduate or professional schools.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students that you know have been pleased with their experience at UH Hilo.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo is as academically rigorous as UH Manoa.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An undergraduate degree from UH Manoa is considered more valuable than a degree from UH Hilo.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo has an informal reputation as a party school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The perception of high school students from Oahu is that you would only go to UH Hilo if you couldn’t get accepted into UH Manoa.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH Hilo could attract more students if the admission requirements were the same as UH Manoa’s requirements.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants agree strongest with the statements “UH Hilo has a strong undergraduate curriculum” and “UH Hilo’s niche is the small liberal arts type campus in the State of Hawaii.” Twenty-two out of 28 counselors interviewed say they strongly agree with both of those statements.

Half of the counselors (14 participants) disagreed upon the statements “UH Hilo could attract more students if the admission requirements were the same as UH Manoa’s requirements” and “An undergraduate degree from UH Manoa is considered more valuable than a degree from UH Hilo.”

Participants seem to feel that UH Hilo’s academic program is strong and the quality of education is at a level equal to UH Manoa.
INFLUENCING FACTORS
Participants were asked about what percentage of the college bound students at their school come to seek advice from them about which college to attend or any other matters relating to college. Most participants say they meet with the majority of their students. The mean average is 71.9%.

Participants were asked what they feel are the top factors influencing students’ and their parents’ decisions as to where they should go for their undergraduate degree. Common responses include cost, location, academic programs, reputation of school, financial aid and campus environment.

The fact that UH Hilo is on the Big Island plays a large role in decision making when students select a college. Participants feel the biggest advantage to this location is that students are able to experience life away from home but are still a close distance from home. The small class sizes are also a plus to many participants.

“That students are able to get away to gain independence and are not too far away from parents and home.”

“That it’s away yet not too far away. The small class sizes. The majors offered.”

“If they want to gain an away experience without going too far, still close to home.”

“It’s away but not too far away and it’s smaller in size.”

“Distance. Not too far and yet far enough. Size of school.”

“Relatively close to home yet still being away.”

“Some kids don’t want to leave Hawaii and UH Manoa is too big. UH Hilo is close to home and mid sized.”

“The campus is close to home and offers the experience of independence to students.”

“Smaller sized public institution which would provide more one-on-one contact between student and teacher.”
On the other hand, many participants feel the disadvantages include boredom from having a lack of activities available on the Big Island. The rural environment may not be suitable for some students and can lead to students getting into trouble. The lack of public transportation and wet weather may also be a problem for some students.

“That there isn’t nothing much to do there.”

“Not as big as students would like. Not as much distractions like here on Oahu.”

“Most feel there is little to do.”

“Small town. Too rural.”

“Climate, small town nature, lack of transportation, no buses.”

“Small town, isolation, drug and alcohol usage island wide.”

“The weather which is rainy. It’s maybe too small of a town for some students.”

“Not being in a major metropolitan area.”

“Not much to do there pertaining to student life.”

RECOMMENDING UH HILo

All participants say they do suggest UH Hilo to students looking at attending college. However, most of the participants say they only do so once in a while. Participants tell students about UH Hilo’s outstanding science and agricultural programs, it’s affordability, the excellent professors and the smaller class sizes that result in more personal attention for each student.

“That they have great majors and has more of a hands on feeling. More attention from professors.”

“It’s known for certain majors and has small class size.”

“That it’s smaller and has a dedicated faculty.”

“It’s a great buy. It’s a state institution that’s more intimate. More one-on-one with teachers. Kids interested in agriculture.”

“That it’s a smaller campus and that that professors are very active.”

“Marine biology, Agriculture and Hawaiian Studies are excellent.”
“The environment is great and that they offer excellent marine and nursing programs.”

“Smaller campus than UH Manoa. Smaller class, better attention. Agriculture class is not offered at UH Manoa.”

“Good Hawaiian studies, Agriculture, Nursing and Astronomy programs.”

The type of student participants usually recommend to UH Hilo tend to be those that are interested in the Sciences or those that are unable to meet the requirements for UH Manoa. Participants would also encourage students who want the experience of being away from home but still within the State to consider UH Hilo.

“Ones interested in Marine Bio, Astronomy majors.”

“A student who wants marine Biology, Astronomy and Hawaiian Studies.”

“Someone wanting a small town environment, someone wanting Astronomy, Marine Biology, Tropical Agriculture and border line UH Manoa.”

“The ones that cannot get into UH Manoa or are interested in Astronomy, sports, Hawaiian studies, Marine Biology.”

“2.5 to 3.0 students who want to get away from home for experience.”

“Students who would probably want to stay here in Hawaii near home but want the experience off island.”

“Those that may not meet UH Manoa standards but yet have good enough grades to attend UH Hilo.”

“The ones that are looking for independence and don’t want to travel far.”

“Local kids who are scared of going to the mainland and kids looking for agriculture or the major sciences like Astronomy or Marine Biology.”

“Hawaiiana interest and a country person.”
EXPERIENCE WITH UH HILO

Twenty-one out of the 28 counselors interviewed say they have toured UH Hilo while 7 say they have not ever seen the campus. Those participants that have visited UH Hilo find the campus landscaping and the layout of facilities to be the most physically appealing aspects of the school. These participants find the campus to be “pretty” and “lush”.

“The campus structure is very nice. It has a nice close feeling.”

“The intimate campus is small enough to get to know faculty and fellow students. It’s also very green and tranquil.”

“Nice campus has great physical facilities.”

“That it was accessible in terms of campus size. The dorms are near to classes.”

“I like the casual atmosphere. Very Hilo.”

“Campus layout and upkeep, safe environment.”

“Very nice, new buildings. I think people are pleasantly surprised when they get there. It’s compact.”

“The grounds. Green, lush, slow pace, green environment.”

“They have a nice Student Center and their grounds are kept very nice.”

“Like the closeness of campus, close to dorms.”

Most participants that have not had the opportunity to visit the campus feel that seeing it and talking to faculty would probably help them in promoting UH Hilo to their students. These participants say that having a visual image to connect with the school would enable them to describe the environment to their students. Speaking with faculty would allow personal interaction and would provide a first hand account of what life at UH Hilo is like.

“Yes, seeing the environment in person would be great. I think it would be great also to meet the faculty. I’ve only heard of great things about them.”

“Definitely it would be great to get the feel and atmosphere of the school.”

“Sure, it would be good to get the latest information and feel of the campus.”
"Yes, to see what they offer in person would be a good thing."

All participants say they would like to be invited to visit UH Hilo with their students and many feel the best time of the year would be over Spring Break or in the beginning of the school year in September. Some others would prefer visiting in February or March when the college application deadlines are over.

**UH HILO RECRUITER**

All participants say the UH Hilo recruiter does visit them on campus to update them on UH Hilo. The average number of times a UH Hilo recruiter has visited the participants is 1.9. Participants say they would like for the recruiter to visit them an average of 1.6 times a year. Therefore, the current number of visits made by a UH Hilo recruiter is at an appropriate level.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR UH HILO**

Participants were asked what they would do if they were in charge of UH Hilo recruiting and wished to encourage Oahu school counselors like themselves to consider suggesting UH Hilo to students more often. Most suggestions related to acquiring more information about UH Hilo through sessions, campus visits, publications and advertising.

"Bring students on an information session to ask questions with recruiters."

"Maybe have a student from Hilo have a speech with students from Oahu to tell them more about UH Hilo and what they offer."

"Would be great to have a pamphlet which has statistics on graduation rates... also the job rate statistics and show them to new college students."

"Inviting counselors to see what they have available. Also to look at graduation rates and retention... those are important factors."

"Continue counselor fly-in program. Make high school visit meeting with counselors and students like recruiters do."

"Just promote it more. Get more advertisement out like on TV over the radio."

"Probably a visit to the campus for students would be great so kids can get a feel for the campus and see first hand if it's for them."