Departmental Response to External Review by Dr. Rona T. Halualani

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1. Make strategic faculty hires as a staffing/capacity solution.

Dr. Halualani clearly stated that “the department’s clear understanding that they need to locate ways to increase faculty/“people power” and capacity to meet their current enrollment and student needs, is right on target” (p. 8). Our department concurs with her that “the Dean should consider ways to create 1-2 tenure-track lines that best suit student demand (Social/New Media, Applied Communication Research, Pacific Islander Communication)” (p. 4). As some of our majors also mentioned to Dr. Halualani (p. 17), our department needs two tenure-track Assistant Professor positions in the areas of (1) social media communication and (2) Pacific islander communication. Those hires will be able to significantly enhance our course offerings.

2. Provide more research and professional development support for faculty.

Our department would like to request the UH-Hilo Administration to reconsider the travel fund policy. According to the current policy, tenured faculty members are eligible even for applying for the travel fund every two years, which limits conference participation and professional development. Dr. Halualani articulated the importance of conference participation: “to participate in academic conferences and have the opportunity to be exposed to other cutting edge scholarship and teaching examples in our discipline and related fields strengthens the role of faculty for their students (in the classroom), for their department and surrounding communities (in their research), and for the university as a whole (in their academic community)” (p. 10).

3. Improve the departmental assessment system.

Our department has begun to revisit our approach to student assessment according to the five core competencies (i.e., oral communication, written communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking) that the WASC outlined. We recognize the need to actively develop useful methods for more directly assessing student work based on the UH-Hilo university-wide rubrics. We will also continue to improve our assessment of the departmental program outcomes and student learning outcomes.

4. Strategize new course models and schedules for the fiscal challenges facing higher education

Our department is willing to continue our conversation as to whether more of our coursework should be delivered via alternative formats or structural arrangements. We are also planning
to explore the relationship between our online and on-ground coursework, including related assessment issues.

5. **Conduct departmental conversations about the larger philosophy and approach to on-ground and online learning and the standards of excellence for designing and implementing each type of modality.**

Our department will revisit our mission and vision for the future. In particular, we will identify how what we do in our program connects with post-graduation professional careers. We will also have department conversations regarding current standards of excellence for either modality (in the classroom and online) and then continue to incorporate them into our course designs and assessment. In cases were there the same courses are delivered by both modalities, we want to be sure students are getting similar learning outcomes.

6. **Pursue external grants (U.S. Department of Education Native Hawaiian Education Grant Competition) to help create Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian Communication courses and or academic offerings to help Pacific Islander retention and graduation at the university.**

Our department agrees with Dr. Halualani that “[t]here exists a wonderful opportunity for the department to create a Pacific Islander Communication course that can stand out as a key offering for the university and the region” (p. 13). If we successfully recruit a tenure-track faculty member or even a lecturer in the area of Pacific Islander communication, we will be able to start to offer such a course and pursue external grants with the expertise and guidance of this new hire. As Dr. Halualani envisioned, the course “could provide students with a survey of Pacific Islander perspectives, demographics, histories, and contemporary experiences” and invite local Pacific Islander leaders to “guest-speak and highlight what it means to be Pacific Islander in today’s world” (p. 13). According to her, “there are only 2 such courses that exist in the country like this (one at the City College of San Francisco and one that I am currently developing for the California State University system)” and our department “could attain recognition, visibility, local interest, and resources through such a curricular offering” (p. 13).

7. **Revisit the department’s advising system and devise a new strategy (concentrated advising faculty rotations, addition of a professional advisor/staff role)**

Our department is willing to examine our current system of student advising to better meet student needs. However, we feel that the department should be responsible only for major-related advising. We intend to participate in on-going campus-wide conversations about advising issues and devise our strategies accordingly.

8. **Connect course offerings to careers and professional pathways and offer more career guidance (in the form of workshops or events or local speakers and career fairs, internships)**

Our department will consider Dr. Halualani’s suggestion that we may create certificate programs related to professional pathways. We also intend to further examine the possibility
of internships and/or career-related guest speakers, career-related workshops, engagement with career fair, etc.

9. Make the department descriptions more contemporary and relevant to today’s student.

Our department will rethink and update our department’s rhetorical self-presentation in the catalogue and online so that students can see that our coursework does indeed have direct bearing on their “professional pathways.”

10. Improve the departmental website; it is currently one-dimensional. Need more information on faculty research and community work. Incorporate a Facebook page, a blog, and Twitter feed.

Our department will try to enhance the dimensionality of our departmental website, and perhaps more actively integrate the social media into our departmental communication with students and the public. If a new faculty hire in social media joins the department, she or he will be able to help the department to improve on this interactive function of the website. As we are currently understaffed, however, we think that no faculty member can update and manage the department Facebook page, blog, and Twitter feed effectively and efficiently.