September 20, 2004

Dear Faculty,

When a new academic year begins, we feel freshness, hope, enthusiasm, energy and aspiration. This is a moment that we can start to build on past successes and to strive to be a more effective institution for teaching and learning. The past academic year was another memorable year for academic faculty. Together, we have accomplished a lot.

- As demonstrated by the size of extramural support and the number of research publications, faculty have had another very productive year in research and other scholarly activities. This past year we signed a master agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey Pacific Ecosystem Research Center. The agreement means that their research grants will go through UH Hilo and bring in substantial indirect return income to UH Hilo. To sustain this effort and the continuing growth, a more coherent research organization and infrastructure is being established. A campus retreat on research support was held during the Spring 2004 semester to address this need and to plan for the future. During this upcoming semester we will add one staff position to support principal investigators and take the administrative burden away from the divisions and departments. The position will be completely paid for by the System, and I thank Dr. Jim Gaines, Interim VP for Research, for recognizing the need of UH Hilo. An office to support research and graduate education will be open in PB-10 led by Dr. Dan Brown, the coordinator of Research and Graduate Education.

- Faculty hiring continues to be our priority, even with the limited resources available to us. During 2004-2005, we will have a record number of new faculty arriving at UH Hilo. Elimination of the lower division tuition rate in Fall 2003 produced some additional tuition revenue, but system assessments and campus expenditures have increased. It turned out that, because of added expenses, only $600,000, out of the $1,000,000 needed for the academic units, was available from increased tuition revenues for 2004-2005. Nevertheless, this still represents one of the largest commitments that the institution has made to the academic units in recent years. However, I will continue to work with you, through the deans and directors, to look for ways to strengthen our faculty and achieve a critical mass in important academic areas.
In cooperation with the CAS Dean, Human Resources Director, EEO/AA Director and faculty governance bodies, we expect to adopt a new faculty hiring handbook to try to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of the hiring process through an electronic medium. We knew that there were likely to be glitches that would have to be resolved in the next round. A revised handbook was completed recently and has been forwarded to the UH Hilo Congress for consultation.

- **Program reviews** continue to be at the heart of our assessment effort. In the past academic year, additional program reviews that included Hawaiian Language, English, Communication, and Religious Studies were initiated and are at various stages of the process. I will be wrapping up the program reviews for Computer Science, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics during the Fall semester. I am hopeful that together we can address the program and resource needs of these programs.

- The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) has **reaffirmed the accreditation** of UH Hilo and has found the institution to be in such sound condition that we have been placed on a ten-year review cycle. We will have a special visit in 2008, and UH Hilo must address and demonstrate substantial progress in the planning of institutional resources to support enrollment growth, institutional governance, academic organizational structure, faculty diversity, and educational effectiveness, particularly in general education and assessment.

The cost of WASC activities is substantial. The annual fee alone is a third of the VCAA’s annual budget. My view of the accreditation process is we must utilize it as an opportunity to seek self improvement. I hope you will continue to work with me on issues of assessment, academic structure, faculty governance and faculty diversity.

- The establishment of the **College of Business and Economics** is an important milestone for UH Hilo’s academic development. Faculty and staff in the former School of Business were energized and the business administration major became the largest major on campus during the process of establishment. The College currently is in its final year of the eight-year-long accreditation process with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. We will
receive the accreditation team when they visit in October. The outlook for the College of Business and Economics is bright.

- The Council of Chief Academic Officers (COCAO) recently discussed the proposal for a **doctoral degree in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language Preservation and Culture Revitalization**. I am pleased to report to you that we have received the support from the Chief Academic Officers. With a new building on the horizon, Ka Haka `Ula O Ke`elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language is on the way to becoming a shining example of program success and excellence.

- We have reached the agreement with members of UH Mānoa during the **Land Grant Mission Review Group** meetings that agricultural experimental stations and extension service are systemwide functions, and UH Hilo faculty can participate in these activities with funds paid by federal formula funding. This progress will afford our faculty to enjoy the same privileges as faculty at other land grant institutions. Faculty can be released from full-time teaching to engage in research and extension efforts with support from Hatch, Smith-Lever and McIntire-Stennis funds. I believe this is a milestone which will enable the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource Management to move forward and begin to address the issue of integration of education, research and extension and to revive the agricultural industry on the Big Island.

- We welcomed the first cohort of students for the **Master of Science in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science** as well as for the **Master of Arts in China-U.S. Relations**. We are in the middle of recruiting a director for the MA in Counseling Psychology to prepare for the first cohort in Fall 2005. Although we have had master degrees in education and Hawaiian Languages for some time, we still need to develop our own graduate policies and procedures. Dr. Dan Brown will be leading the effort to develop the policies and procedures and recommend them to me within 90 days after the Congress endorses the composition of the Graduate Council.

- We will be welcoming Dr. Randy Hirokawa as **Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences** in January 2005. He is the Chair of the Department of Communication at the University of Iowa, a specialist in small group communication, and a native son of Hawai`i. For the last year and half, Interim Dean Stephen Hora and I demonstrated that the VCAA and CAS Dean can work well together. The College of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource Management is in the
process of searching for a new dean, while Interim Dean Jack Fujii is providing able leadership during the transitional period. We will continue to build a strong academic leadership team to serve our faculty and students in a positive and proactive manner.

- For the first time the **academic budget** was allocated prior to the beginning of the fiscal year, an improvement over last year by almost six months. AY 2003-2004 marked the second time that UH Hilo conducted open budget hearings for all academic units. We have added performance indicators as part of the budget process. The process, by all accounts, was inclusive and transparent.

  I thank the deans and directors for their participation in the process. We will continue to make progress to develop a budget allocation process based not only on historical spending but also on performance indicators. In the climate of our budget shortage, I am grateful for the fact that we have not only maintained but increased the academic budget for the past two fiscal years.

- **The University Catalog** is a contract between the University and its students. With the leadership of Helen Rogers, Susan Yugawa and Alyson Kakugawa-Leong, we have completed a major overhaul of our catalog. Together we demonstrated academic strength with a spirit of pursuing excellence.

- We have taken steps to recognize **teaching and learning** as the core functions of the University, and to support the faculty in expanding teaching resources, a committee on teaching and professional development was appointed and received endorsement from the UH Hilo Congress. Workshops on teaching, assessment and technology were held on campus during the fall and spring semesters. Shortly, we will be hiring a highly qualified individual to provide technical support for this important effort.

With the opportunity of teaching a course in the spring semester and completing a grant proposal, I am writing to you this year with a special feeling of closeness to the faculty. Experiencing these activities not only allowed me to access the insight of our classrooms and the process of seeking extramural funding, but more importantly, it allowed me to understand first hand that which you, as faculty, are going through everyday.

As I end this letter, I continue to reflect on our relationship with students. Perhaps the relationship between the university and its students can be
described as symbiotic. The essence of the university’s existence lies with the educational success of its students. In pursuit of educational effectiveness, we, as educators, face an increasing challenge as the needs of our students change constantly, whether it is social, economical, intellectual, cultural or technological. It is imperative that we respond to the changing needs of our students. Higher education is more than just conveying contents and fundamental changes of technology have raised the expectations of all of our constituencies. Together we can meet these challenges and transform the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo to be a truly strong teaching and learning institution.

Mahalo again to you, the faculty, for a very productive academic year, and congratulations for the important progress you have made.

Sincerely,

Christopher Lu
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs