March 6, 2015

Dr. Rockne Freitas
Chancellor
University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu
91-1001 Farrington Highway
Kapolei, HI  96707

Dear Chancellor Freitas:

At its meetings February 18-20, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu (UHWO) November 19-21, 2014. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by UHWO prior to the visit and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted April 3-5, 2012. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Linda Randall, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Eun Ahn, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Jacqueline Honda, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission’s deliberations.

UHWO’s institutional proposal outlined two themes for this comprehensive review: fostering student success and organizing for institutional growth. The two themes are relevant to the institution and its important mission pursued in the context of a new campus.

The Commission’s action letter of July 10, 2012 highlighted four major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: 1) addressing leadership turnover; 2) re-focusing on the strategic plan; 3) creating a student-centered environment at the new campus; and 4) preparing for the EER. All four areas were satisfactorily addressed in the report and during the visit.

In its July 10, 2012 letter, the Commission cautioned UHWO about the long-standing instability in senior leadership positions. UHWO made leadership turnover a priority and by the time of the EER had established a stable senior administration. The evaluator team experienced enthusiasm among faculty, students, and staff for your vision and direction as well as for the ability of the senior leadership team to implement both. The team indicated that “…individuals and groups expressed hope and a collegial commitment to the university’s future and its ability to serve students effectively.”

The Commission commends UHWO for achieving stability with senior leadership and urges the university to sustain this accomplishment going forward.
The Commission commends UHWO for the creation of an organizational commitment to quality assurance by formalizing planning processes across constituencies, resulting in documents such as the strategic plan and the communication plan. The strategic plan articulates the kind of institution UHWO seeks to be in future years, describes the academic programs that align with community needs, and uses evidence to determine faculty and staff expectations. The communication plan provides the structure necessary for formal and official communication that complements informal exchanges and interactions.

UHWO is commended for making progress toward a more student-centered university. Small class sizes and professors committed to student learning and teaching proficiency bolster student success, as do increased financial aid and on-campus employment opportunities. New student organizations and increased student leadership and social opportunities help foster student development. Survey results provide evidence of student satisfaction with a number of these efforts. Integration of curricular with co-curricular efforts will likely achieve greater success in this arena.

The Commission endorses the findings and recommendations of the EER team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

**Resource Planning and Development toward Financial Stability.** UHWO’s rapid growth challenges the university to regularly secure resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. The Commission commends UHWO for securing financial resources and prospective commitments for operational and capital expansion from the state and the University of Hawai‘i system. The Commission also commends UHWO for the successful move to the new Kapolei campus, although the move required general fund support from the state to eliminate an operating deficit. The Commission recommends that general fund support be maintained at a level to realize the academic vision for the campus, with a budgeting process that demonstrates fiscal discipline and appropriate flexibility to accommodate anticipated growth (CFR 3.4).

**Growing Faculty Capacity.** Although slightly more than half of UHWO faculty overall are full-time, the evaluator team reports that, “In several programs, lecturers deliver approximately 70% of the courses. Many of the concentrations are delivered by only one full-time faculty. Sufficiency of faculty remains a critical issue for delivering programs with quality.” UHWO initiated additional faculty hires in 2014. The Commission recommends that UHWO consider the evaluator team’s suggestion to increase faculty capacity with tenure-track faculty lines to facilitate program development and foster student achievement (CFR 3.1).

**Clarifying Decision-Making Structures and Processes.** The evaluator team found that not all decision-making structures and processes were clear or consistent with the institution’s purposes. For example, the team determined that UHWO senior leadership should “...work with faculty for coherency of key academic initiatives and for clarifying the authority of the academic development plan as it pertains to allocation of faculty positions.” The team also called for clarity about the relationship of the Distance Education Committee and the Curriculum and Assessment Committees with regard to the approval and monitoring of distance education programs and the enhancement of the operational infrastructure. The Commission recommends that responsibilities throughout the university continue to be
clarified, lines of authority specified, faculty and student governance structures refined, and organizational flow established to facilitate the success of the educational process. In seeking this clarity, the collegial approach encouraged in students as they prepare to take leadership roles in their communities will serve as an effective method for deliberations, negotiations, and meetings throughout the institution (CFR 3.7, 3.10).

**Developing Assessment Systems.** The UHWO Office of Institutional Effectiveness has been instrumental in effectively assessing student learning outcomes at the institution, division, concentration and course levels. Faculty have invested time and effort in developing expertise in assessment and program review. Assessment results are used in decision-making about academic planning and resources. The Commission recommends that UHWO continue to develop assessment throughout the campus that includes disaggregation of data, standards of performance, and internal and external benchmarks (CFR 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4).

**Strategizing Distance Education Delivery.** The CPR evaluator team raised concerns about the sufficiency of UHWO’s technological resources to address the continuing growth of online learning and use of learning management systems for hybrid and on-ground courses, concerns that the EER team indicated remains salient. The Commission recommends that UHWO be more strategic with distance education delivery that is aligned with enrollment priorities including definitions, policies, faculty development, assessment and technological capacity (CFR 3.5).

In view of the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu for seven years.
2. Remove the Notice of Concern.
3. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the Offsite Review in fall 2021 and the Accreditation Visit scheduled for spring 2022.
5. Request an Interim Report in fall 2018 on the following issues cited in the EER team report: 1) update on sustainability efforts to maintain a stable senior leadership, 2) evidence that general fund support is being maintained to realize the academic vision of the university, including examples of how the UHWO budgeting process demonstrates fiscal discipline and appropriate flexibility to accommodate anticipated growth, 3) evidence of how faculty capacity aligns with program development and student success, including the status of increases in appropriately dedicated faculty positions, 4) evidence of how the university’s decision-making structures and processes reflect clarity of responsibilities and lines of authority, and include refinements of faculty and student governance structures; 5) an update on the assessment process to illustrate the use of disaggregation of data, standards of performance, and internal and external benchmarks across the university, and 6) a distance education strategic plan that aligns delivery with enrollment priorities.
including definitions, policies, faculty development, assessment and technological capacity.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success; Quality and Improvement; and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability. The Commission also confirms that the institution has successfully completed this review conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to maintain its compliance with WSCUC Standards and uphold its commitment to continuous quality improvement.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu governing board and the president of the University of Hawai‘i system in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu website and 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. The team report and the action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC 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,

\[signature\]

Mary Ellen Petrisko
President

MEP/mam

Cc:  William A. Ladusaw, Commission Chair  
    Jacqueline Honda, ALO  
    Randolph Moore, Board Chair  
    David Lassner, University of Hawai‘i System President  
    Members of the EER team  
    Maureen A. Maloney, WSCUC Vice President