



March 2, 2005

Gene Awakuni
Chancellor
University of Hawai'i, West Oahu
96-129 Ala Ike
Pearl City, HI 96782

Dear Chancellor Awakuni:

At its meeting on February 17-18, 2005, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review team that visited the University of Hawai'i, West Oahu (UHWO) on October 18-20, 2004. The Commission also had access to the institutional presentation submitted in preparation for the visit and the institution's response to the team report dated January 4, 2005. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the team report and Educational Effectiveness Review process with you; Linda Johnsrud, the acting Chancellor; and Joseph Mobley, Jr., Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The discussion was helpful in learning more about future plans for the campus, and the overall impact of the past accreditation review process.

This visit was framed by the campus Institutional Proposal, approved in December 2001, the Preparatory Review conducted on March 19-21, 2003, and the Special Visit held on December 7-9, 2003. At the outset of this process, UHWO identified three major goals and outcomes in its Proposal around the theme of emphasizing access for nontraditional students to high quality upper-division programs in the liberal arts and professional studies. As the team reported following the Special Visit, it commended UHWO for demonstrating its commitment to provide educational access to nontraditional students.

The team acknowledged in this Educational Effectiveness visit that UHWO has continued to focus on the goals articulated in the Proposal: 1) to define access in terms specific to UHWO and its mission statement; 2) to identify the hallmarks of high-quality education at UHWO; and 3) to engage the campus community in discussions of educational effectiveness, including procedures on how to measure institution-wide learning objectives. The team commended UHWO for the engagement of faculty in attending to the measurement of student learning across all programs. Assessment strategies have been developed with broad faculty participation and a commitment to implementation. The team noted that UHWO has set realistic timelines in its program review processes and it commended the

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campus on its progress made to date. Work has begun toward establishing institution-wide recommendations for all programs, including the establishment of short-term and long-term goals for student learning measures and educational effectiveness. The team observed “an understanding and an embracing of the new standards that has strengthened institutional resolve.” It was encouraged by the momentum created since both the Preparatory Review in March 2003 and the Special Visit in December 2003. UHWO has also moved toward developing partnerships with community colleges in response to the workforce needs of the State, and this may serve as an important role for the campus.

The team concluded its Educational Effectiveness Report with a list of commendations, and the Commission acknowledges the work undertaken by the entire UHWO community to achieve these milestones. It would appear that the Notice of Concern served as a catalyst for many changes and the question now is whether these changes will be sustained, deepened, and embedded in the institutional culture. This issue was at the base of the recommendations for future action identified by the Educational Effectiveness team, and the Commission endorses these recommendations for campus follow-up. In addition, the Commission highlights the following issues for attention:

Sustaining Financial Viability. At the very outset of this accrediting review cycle, there were concerns about the level of commitment and support for UHWO. Significant additions were made to the budget and staffing to reflect the commitment of the University of Hawaii System to improve the functioning of the campus. As reflected in the Special Visit and Educational Effectiveness Review reports, the additional funding has made a significant difference in the ability of the campus to meet its goals, and the addition of the academic vice chancellor position has provided the structural basis for academic planning and leadership. With the University-wide stocktaking exercise now completed and with the System budget before the legislature, it remains to be seen whether the level of support for the campus will be maintained and whether funding will be available for necessary improvements. As the campus continues to plan its enrollment growth, it is critical that the campus and System budget and resource planning are aligned with each other. Concerns were also expressed by the team, given the renewed sense of faculty engagement, about sustaining the financial support for faculty positions established since the Capacity and Preparatory review visit. At the time of the next review it will be important to see that the level of support for the campus is sustained or increased to provide the basis for the campus to continue to grow in size, range of programs, and effectiveness. In addition, with the new budgeting system linked to strategic planning, it will be important for the campus to demonstrate that its resource allocations are linked to academic and financial planning priorities.

Continuing Academic Planning and Leadership. As indicated above, the creation of the Academic Vice Chancellor position has had a significant impact on providing the focus and structure for leading academic planning and initiatives such as the establishment of the program review process. That process, now underway, needs to be supported and sustained

across all programs. Programs offered on campus, as well as through distributed learning, need to focus on the collection and analysis of data toward measuring student learning and need to integrate the results into program improvement. The partnership being planned with Kapi'olani Community College shows promise. It will require the institutional capacity to support and sustain the establishment of the "inverted baccalaureate" and to ensure that students entering and completing the program demonstrate learning and achievement appropriate to the baccalaureate level. As the campus moves to hire a new Vice Chancellor, the centrality of this role continues. It will be important to assure that the leadership provided by this position continues at the time of the next review.

Institutionalizing Learning Centeredness. UHWO has made substantial progress in identifying learning outcomes and collecting data based on various forms of assessment. These steps will now need to be continued and deepened. In addition to using the program review process as a means of assuring program vitality and learning effectiveness, UHWO will need to address divisional and specialization outcomes, and assess course-taking patterns and retention/graduation data to ensure that all students admitted to the University are well served. To the extent possible, data should be disaggregated by student type to provide the basis for analysis. As recommended by the team, the campus "needs to learn how to reflect on the data and feedback it is collecting and determine how to set goals for improvement."

Assuring Leadership Stability for the Campus. The team acknowledged that despite recent transitions in leadership, the campus has demonstrated significant and substantial improvement within a few short months. With a new Chancellor arriving and a permanent Academic Vice Chancellor to be hired, new directions may well be charted. It will be important for the accomplishments of the past to be sustained and embedded into institutional culture and practice, even as new initiatives are undertaken. The Commission also understands that explorations will occur for possible development of UHWO in a land partnership arrangement, which may lead to UHWO eventually moving to four-year status. Planning for such changes will need to be made carefully, and the commitment to the adult learners currently served by UHWO needs to be honored within any new mission developed by the campus.

The Commission acted to:

1. Remove the Notice of Concern.
2. Reaffirm the Accreditation of the University of Hawai'i, West Oahu.
3. Schedule a Special Visit in fall 2008 focusing on the issues raised in this letter. The format of the Special Visit report should follow that suggested in the enclosed memorandum. *The Guide for Special Visits* will be mailed shortly. Four copies of the report will be due two months before the visit.

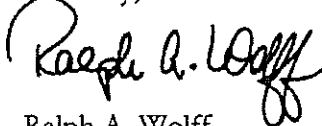
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4. Schedule the Proposal for the two-stage Review to be due in fall 2007. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for spring 2010 and the Education Effectiveness Review in spring 2011.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the University of Hawai'i, West Oahu has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness and has successfully completed the multistage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the University is expected to continue its progress and be prepared to respond as expectations of institutional performance, especially with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning, further develop under the application of the Standards of Accreditation.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

RW/brn

Cc: John D. Welty
Members of the team
Lily Owyang