The Mānoa Experience
Department Chair Interview Report

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Introduction

References to the Mānoa Experience, Hawaiian Place of Learning, and Hawaiian Sense of Place are a major focus in the two recent Mānoa strategic plans: Defining Our Destiny, 2002-2010 and Achieving Our Destiny, 2011-2015. Various Mānoa documents and conversations about these concepts appear to revolve around slightly different definitions. These differences called for a wider conversation to explain what constitutes the Mānoa Experience and how to reflect this in our curriculum and students and campus life. In addition, the recent WASC accreditation reports pointed out the need to clarify what we mean by the Mānoa Experience.

In spring 2010, the Mānoa Experience Workgroup was formed by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs to determine how to proceed with this conversation. To date, surveys have been conducted with alumni, new students, and graduating students. Additionally a campus-wide focus group session was held in November 2010 and a Mānoa Experience Creative Arts Competition in October 2011.

The surveys solicited feedback regarding the quality of Mānoa’s academic programs, student engagement in research and creative activities, artistic and cultural expression in the curriculum and campus life, appreciation for world cultures, incorporation of the principles of sustainability, respect for indigenous knowledge and practices, and infusion of Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific traditions, values, and perspectives in the curriculum and campus life—all themes that permeated Mānoa’s two most recent strategic plans.

The next step in our data gathering was to gather faculty input by interviewing selected department chairs. We focused on departments that generate significant undergraduate student semester hours (SSH) as these departments had interactions with the largest number of undergraduates. Based on fall 2010 registration data, the top twenty departments in generation of SSH in the undergraduate courses were determined. Nine department chairs were selected to participate in a 30 minute interview. Two faculty members from Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge were also interviewed.

The interview questions were (1) As a faculty member, what does Mānoa as a Hawaiian Place of Learning mean to you; (2) How does your department foster and support the development of a Hawaiian Place of Learning in your programs and interactions with students, and (3) What do you feel is unique about a Mānoa education?

At the end of January 2012, the invitation letters were sent to the selected department chairs and faculty members to seek their agreement to participate in the interview. After this, the interview time was scheduled and interview site was confirmed for every interview participant at their earliest convenience. Email reminders were sent to
interviewees a week prior to the scheduled interview. With the consent of each interviewee, all interviews were recorded by using a digital recorder. The interviews were conducted during February and May 2012. The interview data (recording and transcripts) are kept in the computer at the OVCAA. The detailed five-step research process is presented as follows:

1. Transcribe data: transcribe the interview data immediately to keep the freshness of the conversation, and create a folder for each interviewee.
2. Check accuracy: double check the accuracy of the transcripts and then contact the interviewees for clarification of terms and wording which were not comprehended by the researchers.
3. Clean data: work on the interview data case by case and highlight sections which were useful to answer the three research questions.
4. Organize data: organize the highlighted portions into three documents for each research question.
5. Analyze data: create themes for the integrated data and group them for each of the questions.

Five themes emerged from the responses to the first interview question: (1) Hawaiian culture and value, (2) a place for Hawaiian students, (3) Hawaiian knowledge as legitimate knowledge, (4) Hawai‘i and global relevance, and (5) uncertain perceptions.

The responses to the second interview question clustered around the following four themes: (1) coursework with Hawaiian focus, (2) Native Hawaiian advancement, (3) local community attachment, and (4) student faculty interaction.

The responses to the third interview question centered on the following four themes: (1) role of the university, (2) quality and distinctive academic programs, (3) natural and cultural environment, and (4) challenges faced by Mānoa. Some responses cover more than one theme.
Question One:

As a faculty member, what does Mānoa as Hawaiian Place of Learning mean to you?

Five themes emerged in analyzing the first interview question: (1) Hawaiian culture and value, (2) a place for Hawaiian students, (3) Hawaiian Knowledge as legitimate knowledge, (4) Hawai‘i and global relevance, and (5) uncertain perceptions. Some responses cover more than one theme.

Theme One: Hawaiian Culture and Value

The theme of Hawaiian culture and value emerged in the conversations with four faculty members. One faculty member employed the term of “situatedness” to express the importance of culture awareness and her understanding of Hawaiian Place of Learning.

I think that it is important that we respect the place where we are. So for me I am aware of our situatedness at this valley in the State of Hawai‘i and that we recognize the value that represents, here in Hawai‘i. So for me, I know there are values of collectivism, and respect for the place, respect for people who were born and raised here. . . To have Hawai‘i inuikea as an indigenous college within a four-year college, I think that it is a value.

Another faculty mentioned that a real Hawaiian Place of Learning needed to go beyond just putting Hawaiian content in the coursework.

I think that we need to learn from what the indigenous people can inform us in terms of sustainable participation in life. So I think that we need to go beyond just putting Hawaiian content in our courses. As I understand, in most of indigenous cultures, including Hawaiian culture, art is integrated within the entire life, like the aesthetic way of using resources and making the environment poetic and beautiful through words and songs, surface ornamentation, and designs of utilitarian objects. All of that is integrated into everything that we do. So that is important, what I think Hawaiian place of learning means.

One faculty member mentioned that the important feature of Hawaiian Place of Learning was to include Native Hawaiian culture because UH Mānoa offers degrees in Hawaiian Studies and Hawaiian Language.

It means to me exactly that Mānoa should be a champion and a leader in promoting or learning about Hawai‘i as a place and native Hawaiian culture. . . So that is appropriate given that we are a flagship university in this country that offers Hawaiian Studies and Hawaiian Language.
...I think the Hawaiian Place of Learning, the broader, you know, aspect is to teach our students awareness of the Hawaiian culture and the Hawaiian language, right? But one of the values of Hawaiian culture, if I understand it correctly, is also to teach acceptance and tolerance, and those things.

Another faculty described Mānoa as a Hawaiian Place of Learning by mentioning the Aloha Spirit, and how that was reflected in campus culture.

The first thing comes to my mind is the Aloha Spirit. What do I mean by that? I graduated from a very large university on the mainland. The student and faculty interactions are very different in a big university compared to here in UHM. Here faculty members have their doors open. Students can come in anytime without an appointment. So I think that exemplified what I mean by the Aloha Spirit, and Hawaiian Place of Learning here.

**Theme Two: A Place for Hawaiian Students**

The theme of a place for Hawaiian students appeared in the conversations with three faculty members. They asserted that the meaning of Mānoa as a Hawaiian Place of Learning was a place for Hawaiian students to get access to higher education and to better understand the local environment and serve the local community. One faculty presents his opinions as follows:

When we first began using this term, certainly the Hawaiian Studies faculty and Hawaiian Language faculty here believed that this is a place for Hawaiian students. This is an institution where our own people can get access to higher education.

Many Hawaiian students in high schools, especially in public schools do not believe that they belong in a university at all. . . We are actually dealing with larger and larger numbers of students who cannot leave Hawai‘i. They don’t possess the resources and the finances. . . we need to educate them and we need to get them to be productive. So that comes back the first thing I have talked about: it is going to be a place of Hawaiian learning.

Another faculty member has been living in Hawai‘i for 26 years. He considers Hawai‘i his home and a dream place for researchers. His concept of Mānoa as a Hawaiian Place of Learning is to teach local students how to appreciate and protect this land.

This is the only university in the tropics in the whole of the United States, with a very strong Hawaiian background. We are dealing with our own ecosystem [in our courses]. . . And it is great to teach students from here just how important the local environment is. It is amazing how many students don’t know they actually live in a tropical environment. It is amazing how many of them do really appreciate the marine environment, but don’t know what to do about it.
One faculty member mentioned that a Hawaiian Place of Learning should address that a Mānoa education was not just about job seeking but recruiting visionaries for the future of the society.

I would like to think that our department is not just producing people that make these objects for sale. I think what we provide as a discipline is a way of thinking through solving problems, and that can inform any kind of practice in real life. . . I think Hawaiian Place of Learning should talk about that, to address that, too, not just about jobs and training people to fill the existing careers. Visionary is really beyond, and engaging the future of our society.

**Theme Three: Hawaiian knowledge as Legitimate Knowledge**

The theme of Hawaiian knowledge as legitimate knowledge surfaced in the conversations, that Hawaiian knowledge should be regarded as legitimate knowledge in the context of a true Hawaiian Place of Learning. The following story is told by one faculty member:

It gives me hope when people say Hawaiian Place of Learning. That means that there is a respect called to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i. It’s not just something that they can say: Oh, we are a Hawaiian Place of Learning because we are in Hawai‘i. But we are a Hawaiian Place of Learning because we actually care about the people, their knowledge, and the knowledge is respected and considered as legitimate knowledge. That’s kind of what I think of when somebody says Hawaiian Place of Learning. Not necessarily that we do everything in a Hawaiian traditional way, but there is a respect for Hawaiian cultures and values, and Hawaiian knowledge is also legitimatized.

. . . That is what I said about the legitimatized knowledge. The Hawaiian knowledge is really respected and regarded as legitimate sources for research, and a legitimate subject to research, and people who work in that arena are recognized as scholars.

Another faculty member suggested that Hawaiian knowledge should be infused into the mainstream at UH Mānoa.

We believe that there is a rich traditional knowledge that comes out of our own native experiences of our land in this place. Knowledge of scientific, artistic, and humanistic fields, which is deep and long, has its roots in over hundreds of generations of people. So we saw Mānoa as a place where that knowledge too would be slowly infused into the mainstream at a western academy. We actually see over time the development of a unique curriculum at the University of Hawai‘i, a curriculum that was broader than simply a typical American university, even broader than universities that claimed to be international by embracing the Far East, China, Asia, Korea. This would be very much specific island- and native-centered, and these things would be infused into the curriculum in many
different places . . . You know in medicine, in astronomy, in sciences, and social sciences.

**Theme Four: Hawai‘i and Global Relevance**

The theme of Hawai‘i and global relevance emerged in the conversations with three faculty members. They all mentioned that Mānoa as a Hawaiian Place of Learning needed to address issues relevant to Hawai‘i and beyond, and that Mānoa should produce students who can survive not only in Hawai‘i but also in the world.

One faculty member came to Hawai‘i for his Master’s degree at Mānoa, went to another university for his PhD degree, and then came back as a professor. In reflecting on his learning process regarding Hawaiian Place of Learning, he mentioned that a Hawaiian Place of Learning should include three areas:

Over time though I think this was encouraged by the department, by the university. It was encouraged that we see ourselves as particular to a place. We need to represent the people whose culture we are imbedded in. So for me, that’s been a long and wonderful learning process that I become over time since I am not native to Hawai‘i. But now I have been living here for thirty years. And I try to reflect my location in as many productive ways as I can. Hawaiian Place of Learning, I do try to put those three things together: this is Hawai‘i; this is a place that isn’t like other places (but still as part of global); and as kind of global citizen now, we need to learn with our eyes in two directions—toward the outer world and to the place itself, or to the region, this island.

Another faculty member emphasized that Hawaiian Place of Learning should not only focus on Hawai‘i but also on the greater world around us.

My initial reaction to Hawaiian Place of Learning is this is a place where Hawaiian students learn about Hawai‘i. Not only Hawai‘i, but being in a university, a state university, they learn about the greater world around them, where they fit in, because the purpose of a university is to be universal and educate people in all different areas, specializing in their own and to branch out and look at required knowledge in other areas. I also think as a place of learning, geographically, Hawai‘i is the center of the Pacific. It’s a place of learning where everyone can come together and learn to study together.

One faculty member mentioned that Hawaiian Place of Learning should put emphasis on the balance between Hawai‘i and global relevance to fulfill the responsibility of a university.

I do really want to emphasize that a university of higher learning must emphasize the important global learning and the global community. Whoever will be trained has to be able to survive in the global environment. We have to make sure what we teach is not just relevant to Hawai‘i but also relevant to the world. We must
have this balance. It is good to make sure that we are rooted in Hawaiian culture, but at the same time, whatever we teach must be global enough for students to survive.

**Theme Five: Uncertain Perceptions**

The theme of uncertain perceptions appeared in the conversations with two faculty members. They commented on a lack of a campus-wide shared vision regarding a Hawaiian Place of Learning.

Even though I have been living here for more than 20 years, I don’t have a very good idea about what that would mean for Mānoa to be a Hawaiian Place of Learning. So when I read that question, I am thinking of a cultural idea. To me, it reflects the idea that there is something about the Hawaiian cultural experience that might make Mānoa a different place to learn or provide different ways to learn than students might receive from other American universities. But I don’t feel that I have a very good understanding of what kind of aspects of Hawaiian culture would be relevant for this kind of setting.

But how that translates into learning environment, for me, is difficult to see, and that is something that I have no direct experience with. So I think that if this is something that the university feels very strongly about, then one question, I guess, would be how we develop a sort of shared sense in the Mānoa community. In my impression, I don’t think that there exists a kind of particular sense that we approach teaching and learning here in a very different way because we are in Hawai‘i. Here comes another question. I see that the influence of this place has more to do with the international nature because of student body and their backgrounds. But in terms of Hawaiian cultural influence, to me, there is not a clear sense that people on campus have some shared vision.

Another faculty member proposed that a true Hawaiian Place of Learning should be established on the foundation of Hawaiian epistemology and world views.

I don’t think that we are Hawaiian Place of Learning at this point of time, and I think that we will have a long way to get to that place. I think if we were Hawaiian Place of Learning, then culture, value, tradition, language, epistemology, and world view would be the foundation of learning. And they will be the centers of learning and certainly they are not in a large Research I university like this. I don’t know if they ever can be. But to be a true Hawaiian Place of Learning, we will be starting with the foundation of Hawaiian epistemology and world views.

We are certainly no way near there, and I don’t know if we can possibly be, or if we should even try to be, given the diversity of faculty and students in our state. I certainly think that we have an obligation, an ethical obligation, a responsibility to listen and learn from the host culture and try to understand it better. But whether it
can be a foundation for everything that we do here in a sense of a true Hawaiian Place of Learning, I think that we are not anywhere close.
Question Two:

How does your department foster and support the development of a Hawaiian Place of Learning in your programs and interactions with students?

The responses to this question fall into four themes that emerged from the interviews. They are: (1) coursework with Hawaiian focus, (2) Native Hawaiian advancement, (3) local community attachment, and (4) student faculty interaction. Some responses cover more than one theme.

Theme One: Coursework with a Hawaiian Focus

The theme of coursework with Hawaiian focus emerged in conversations with ten faculty members. Coursework with Hawaiian focus includes courses focusing on Hawaiian literature, culture, language, and value, or courses relevant to the context of Hawai‘i.

One faculty member pointed to the existence of the School of Hawaiian Knowledge and the Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific focus requirement in the undergraduate general education curriculum as important elements of a Hawaiian Place of Learning:

Well, I mentioned Hawai‘inuiākea. So having an indigenous college in a research university is special. Undergraduate students in our department are expected to have the culture components in their education, and most of them fulfill that requirement through Hawaiian studies classes. I like that. I think that is important. You know having them think about any culture in-depth is good for them to understand their own culture. Why do they do the things they do? So it is easy to go through life never realizing what you do is culture. You do what you do because of your culture, and other people do what they do because of their culture.

Examples of integrating a Hawaiian focus into courses included:

- developing a new art course incorporating materials and skills from traditional Hawaiian culture.

- looking for ways to encourage or to bring in, to embrace the literature and culture of Hawai‘i; developing a curriculum that recognizes Hawai‘i as a historical place and a contemporary place; teaching Hawaiian content, authors, or values across the curriculum (undergraduate through graduate levels); looking at cultural and historical events from both historical and literal perspectives; increasing the number of Hawaiian faculty; offering courses and seminars focused on literatures in Hawai‘i and the Pacific and ethnic literatures classes that often include Hawaiian literature.
• including examples and issues occurring in the local community into course work and encouraging student research on local issues.

• connecting course content with the Hawaiian community—local issues, island issues, island cultures, language comparisons; creation of specific courses that integrate Hawai‘i and Hawaiian culture into the course content; teaching courses (non-Hawaiian language) in Hawaiian.

• understanding and appreciating the need for culturally responsible practices—providing students different multiple opportunities for communicating, engaging, and demonstrating their learning; lots of collaborative group work, oral communication, as well as written communicating, use of art and performance assessments; encouraging students to use their home language in class.

• including Hawaiian authors and local literature in courses including literature that deals with Native Hawaiian issues.

• utilizing local resources/environment (use what surrounds us) in coursework in Biology (study of inland waters, respecting the land, the ocean, and everything around us) and Physics (water wave, surfing).

A faculty member reflected on the changes he’s observed in terms of curriculum and courses with Hawaiian focus based on his years of experience at Mānoa.

I think in terms of bringing our knowledge into the general curriculum, there has been more success in some departments than others, for instance, the department of English, Political Science, School of Social Work, and American Studies. These are all departments and schools that have really embraced this notion of making a change in their curriculum, not just for the sake of encouraging Hawaiian cultural values, but really trying to bring Hawaiian Knowledge into their curriculum.

**Theme Two: Native Hawaiian Advancement**

The theme of Native Hawaiian advancement surfaced in conversations with seven faculty members. Promoting Native Hawaiian advancement programs are viewed as another feature of creating a Hawaiian Place of Learning. Some departments offered scholarships and programs for students with Hawaiian ancestry, some hired Hawaiian faculty members, and others included Hawaiian knowledge and values in their curriculum.

Examples of Native Hawaiian advancement include:

• scholarship programs for Hawaiian students in graduate programs and for students focusing on the study of literature of the Pacific; travel scholarships for students to do research; increasing the number of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander faculty members; publication of a Native Hawaiian literary journal (Oiwi),
another literary journal (Tinfish) that publishes many Native Hawaiian writers, and publication of the Hawai‘i Review (edited by students) dedicated to publishing the writers of Hawai‘i.

- increasing the matriculation of Native Hawaiian students into graduate programs; providing undergraduate students the opportunity to conduct research with faculty.

- increasing the number of Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian faculty members; working with Hawaiian faculty members to build more cultural understanding in courses; participating in traditional Hawaiian cultural activities.

Dissertations written in the Hawaiian language and the increase of Hawaiian student enrollments at Mānoa were also cited as examples of Native Hawaiian advancement.

I did my dissertation in Hawaiian. Nobody has done that before. So in a sense, that is a change. That happened since I was here. . . . My dissertation is . . . about Hawaiian ways of speaking and particularly with regard to the way we point agencies. Agencies mean anyone who responds to doing something. . . . We can also see the percentage of Hawaiians here at the university has increased over the years. . . . That is something that can be pointed out on the positive side.

. . . I want to see those things with regard to Hawaiian culture be recognized as legitimate forms of knowledge, and translating that into something that can kind of line up with what we were doing from the western perspectives, particularly with regard to dissertations. You know, I would like to see dissertations not done on Hawaiian but done in Hawaiian, or done in Hawaiian ways. . . . Some people just think planting some trees, changing the architectural style of some of the buildings. You know they are really superficial kinds of things, and changing those things somehow qualifies the response to this statement Hawaiian Place of Learning. I don’t think that is enough. . . . Let’s go with this, but not stop at the surface.

One faculty member also proposed changes that he wanted to see in promoting the native Hawaiian advancement at Mānoa including integrating Hawaiian knowledge with the curriculum, improving facilities for Hawaiian language teaching and learning, and increasing the percentage of Hawaiian faculty and students at Mānoa.

I think this sort of acceptance of the old knowledge that comes out of people of this place is less successful in the whole campus than I would like. I think eventually we will see a general kind of shift and transformation of people’s curriculum throughout the university. . . . So I think the key is an understanding of what a great tool it is to master the Hawaiian language and to encourage more and more researchers to develop the facilities of that language equal to the facilities in English or other modern languages. So I do think that is also something we’d like to see happen is . . . we should try to recruit more Hawaiian students because at
this point we only have 12 percent in this university and we represent 22 percent population. . . . We feel that we have a way to go.

Theme Three: Local Community Attachment

The theme of local community attachment emerged in the interviews with seven faculty members. They described different programs and projects that were strongly tied with the local communities in Hawai‘i including:

- the Graphic Design Workshop—a special studio run by advanced BFA graphic design students with faculty supervision and committed to providing high-quality graphic design work for non-profit organizations in Hawai‘i. Most completed projects have won local, national or international recognition. Projects provide students with experience in the professional field including training in how to work with the clients and how to prepare materials to go to printers.

- organizing events, dedicated to great artists of Hawai‘i, to bring local or regional artists to give readings on campus.

- conducting research relevant to Hawai‘i; looking at local issues, local values, local practices, issues related to Hawaiian health.

- participating in a research group whose work informs decision-making and policies at the state level including economic forecasting, environmental issues, natural resource issues.

- recruiting and providing support to students from Waianae and the Leeward coast as part of a teacher preparation program; advocating community-based practices and place-based learning.

- hiring a faculty member to organize outreach efforts for the department, focusing on high schools and community-based activities.

- conducting workshops for local high school students.

Theme Four: Student Faculty Interaction

The theme of student faculty interaction emerged in the interviews with four faculty members. Students’ involvement in research projects which were relevant to Hawai‘i and achieving an easy and comfortable relationship between students and faculty members were described. Examples included:

- using an apprenticeship model to involve undergraduate and graduate students in research projects sponsored by faculty members. Projects have focused on the transition of Native Hawaiian and immigrant children to kindergarten, and the effects of Hawaiian language immersion programs on parents and children.
• involving undergraduate and graduate students in research relevant to the local economy or working on projects that directly or indirectly focus on Hawai‘i.

• creating cohorts of students who work with each other and faculty members for two years, e.g. creating an ʻohana for the students.

• fostering a Hawaiian Place of Learning by being available to interact with students, even outside of office hours, and creating a welcoming environment for students.
Question Three:

What do you feel is unique about a Mānoa education?

The responses were analyzed based on the following four themes that emerged from the interviews: (1) role of the university, (2) quality and distinctive academic programs, (3) natural and cultural environment, and (4) challenges faced by Mānoa. Some responses cover more than one theme.

Theme One: Role of the University

The theme of the role of the university appeared in conversations with six faculty members. One faculty member earned his Master’s degree at Mānoa and went to another university to pursue his PhD degree and then came back to teach at this university. Upon his return, he anticipated that “what I would be doing would be more than just teaching a subject but becoming really a part of community effort to keep what we value here.”

My Master’s degree here sets my memory apart from the other two universities because you get a sense of a group of communities really tightly held together by the island. It’s just a matter of little space on the island. I would say the outcome of that was that there are a lot of stakes here. You are in a very beautiful place, but very small, and a lot of people are from all around the world. And this is the only big established university in the State. So I have a feeling that the role of this university is really important in keeping Hawai‘i Hawai‘i, keeping it strong and healthy. We are really like an engine or a heart, taking care of the circulation of knowledge and abilities, skills and money too. It is not just an academy. It is a place of learning. It is a place of taking care of, or learning how to take care of, this place.

Another faculty member also mentioned the unique role this university had in the local communities, especially on this small island.

I think because it is a state university, a commuter school on a very limited space on an island, it does more reasonably let you integrate community issues in the classroom. You cannot get away from community issues. Everyday just look at the newspaper, look at the front page, how can you not focus more on what’s happening in the community than in the world. Of course you should be looking at the evening news and reading papers to know what is going on in the world. But I think here is easier to focus on the community and to make connections.

One faculty member mentioned a close connection between this university and the local society.

Because we are small and on an island, what we teach and the role of this university has a strong connection with the larger society and the Legislature. I know some universities are very isolated. Some universities are located in the
most conservative place and they can be really radical because they are very isolated and they don’t have many interactions with the larger community, the local community. I think that is also very unique in Hawai‘i. There is such a close connection and a close tie with the Legislature and the local community.

Another faculty member described how features of native research could enrich the University.

This place is really a laboratory on how societies are built essentially from the interchange of people from different places, meeting, negotiating, fighting, worrying, intermarrying, all of these things. This place is like no other place. So having an understanding of that, and having an understanding of that language as your foundation makes you a better researcher in all kinds of things because this kind of understanding tends to make you appreciate the complexity of doing research... This is really an important feature of native research and native researchers. I think that is something that other professors in other disciplines could learn.

One faculty member talked about a dual role that Mānoa shouldered.

In some ways at Mānoa, we kind of do what the University of California does and what the California State University does. We do both. We are the main research university. But we are also serving the children of Hawai‘i. I think that it is a real challenge because we end up in our classes with huge varieties of preparation. And then we have to decide how to teach with that.

Another faculty member mentioned that Mānoa had to do a lot of things and cover a lot of areas as a land-grant and sea-grant public university on the island.

That forces Mānoa to be many things to many people. Unlike on the mainland, you could go within 20 miles there is another university, or even maybe in a shorter distance. A single university can be very specialized in a certain area. But Mānoa, because it is a public land-grant and sea-grant university, it really needs by mandate to cover a lot of areas. In some sense resources are too thin in some cases. So again, it is very unique.

One faculty member expressed a similar opinion. He pointed out the achievements that Mānoa made with limited resources and investment on this small island, and also mentioned concerns about the fact that Mānoa tried to achieve everything.

I have found it amazing that this university in the Pacific tries to do everything, which I don’t know if it is good or bad... We have a Law School, a Medical School, and a Business School. We have all traditional departments found in big universities, Carnegie Research 1 institutes. And that is amazing accomplishment considering the tax base in Hawai‘i. We have one million people. We are in a very small place. Yet, we have accomplished a lot.
Theme Two: Quality and Distinctive Academic Programs

The theme of quality and distinctive academic programs emerged in the conversations with six faculty members. They commented on academic programs of this university in general and their departments in particular. One faculty member mentioned a unique and solid academic program in their department as follows:

In general our program is not different from other state universities in the way it is organized. But there are no universities that offer the [specialized] courses we offered in our program. We have one course on Southeast Asia monuments and nationalism. There is just no other place like us. In any semester, students can get an exciting menu of courses. They will not get them anywhere because most of the focus is either European or America, or sometimes maybe more southern parts of the United States.

Another faculty member stated that they offered a very solid liberal arts degree which helped their students be very competitive

I think that our students are very competitive. They do well. Our students who want to go to graduate schools do quite well. Many students go to Law School, Business School, Architecture, Psychology, Medicine, and other fields. So I know that our students are learning the analytical skills they need, the data skills, critical thinking, and they go on to do what they want. . . . We offer a very solid liberal arts degree. I think it is a good one.

One faculty member mentioned that the culturally diverse learning environment and strong foreign language programs of this university helped to prepare students with different skills and perspectives which in turn enabled them to become more competitive in the job market.

I think students who go to this university enjoy the culturally diverse learning environment. And that gives them some different perspectives, and maybe allows, I hope, them to take ideas about cultural sensitivity and cultural openness to job settings. I think that would be attractive for companies to hire students that have that kind of background. I think the fact that we have excellent language programs here and we have a requirement that students have some foreign language experiences makes our students more attractive to employers because they have these different set of skills. So in terms of diversity, language is one thing that is unique in this place.

Another faculty member pointed out the diverse faculty and diverse courses offered here on Mānoa campus and mentioned that the strong Asia-Pacific focused program in their department made a Mānoa education really unique.
Our faculty is probably more diverse than maybe some mainland universities. The courses we offer are diverse. The emphasis of Asia-Pacific is very important. A lot of students come to our department because of the emphasis of Asia-Pacific. Many universities on the mainland in fact have Asia programs. But we are one of the biggest departments [in this field] in this country.

One faculty member summarized her understanding of the uniqueness of a Mānoa education. Since she mentioned several aspects that are related to quality and distinctive academic programs, we included her comments in this theme.

Certainly the beauty of the natural environment, the richness of the host culture, the weather, the fact that we are the Research I university, that our college itself is ranked at 35 in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, I think all these draw students to us. We are also nationally accredited, so that draws students to us as well. The diversity, the Aloha spirit, all the things make us unique, I think.

Another faculty member advocated that the uniqueness of a Mānoa education was a reflection of the diversity of students and faculty at the University.

So the mission . . . is about the reconnection with the past of your people. Regardless of where you are from, you bring that when you arrive here. You bring it in your DNA, you bring it in your food preference, and you bring it in your language. This university should be a university that cherishes all of these. And one can see what is happening in the rest of the society by looking at what is happening in a university. So we should cherish these. Let’s bring more students from other places, not just because they are the most fantastic astronomers, let’s bring them also because they are tremendous Okinawans, or tremendous Taiwanese. Because they are motivated, and because they speak their languages. Let’s bring them for those reasons. And if we do that, this university will mirror the great prophecy that Hawai‘i has already offered to the world.

The theme of natural and cultural environment emerged in the interviews with seven faculty members. One faculty member mentioned that the geographic location of this university made Mānoa unique.

You know Hawai‘i is very unique in the U.S. It’s part of the U.S., but unlike the mainland U.S. culture. It is half way between the mainland U.S. and Asia. . . .It is unlike other U.S. states. It has lots of Asian influences, but it is part of the U.S.

Another faculty member mentioned that the strong tie with Asian countries of this university made Mānoa unique and different from other universities in the United States.

When we sit down and talk about what we try to achieve in our graduate program, one of things that we try to achieve is that we not just serve students from U.S.
but we especially try to serve students from other countries. So we think about the fact that we have to have a curriculum that would be useful for somebody who came from a developing Asian country who wants to go home and work for the government. They are going to get skills though our graduate classes that allow them to do that, and that does influence what we do. . . . We have a tradition of really thinking that our programs serve students from Asia, especially from developing economies in Asia.

The conversations shed further light on the uniqueness of the geographic location of Mānoa.

People think that Hawai‘i is isolated, and they think living on the mainland in a big city is not isolated. Now I think it is the reverse. Going to somewhere in the Midwest, you only think about that place, you only need people from that place. If you are in Hawai‘i, you feel more worldwide influence than anywhere else. I think that probably makes it unique.

One faculty member mentioned the multicultural environment in Hawai‘i, and also talked about the unique natural environment that was conducive to teaching and research in their field of study.

I have never been a place in the world in my life that is more multicultural than here. The other thing is what we are surrounded with. We can teach more or less all year around. We don’t have bad winter, do we? No, we don’t get icy storms. It is fun and maybe we should teach more outside than we do in the environment. I take my class out all the time. We always go somewhere, even if just in Mānoa stream. Because you cannot, I mean in Scotland, in North England, North America, part of the year you don’t go outside at all. And here it is great, you can. That is a unique thing people tend to forget about as they sort of get used to the environment.

Another faculty member highlighted that the understanding of different cultures was one important component in their academic discipline, and that the diverse culture in Hawai‘i made it possible to achieve that goal.

One of our goals in educating students in our department has to do with understanding different cultures. A number of faculty members think about and teach about the cultural differences. This is something that happened in our undergraduate program, and graduate classes. I think helping people understand culture is really important today. Hawai‘i is so obviously diverse, the mainland is incredibly diverse, and the world is globalizing. So we need to have an understanding of different people, their beliefs, values and goals, and how that impacts how they develop, how they operate.
One faculty member mentioned that Hawai‘i was not only multicultural but also intercultural and interracial, and this kind of uniqueness resulted in a unique teaching experience in this university.

Everybody says Hawai‘i is multicultural. But, Hawai‘i is also intercultural and interracial. When I first came to Hawai‘i, I was so curious because I saw a lot of Asian students in my class, and asked about their ethnicity: are you Chinese or Japanese? It is really not that simple. Most of students are quarter Chinese, quarter Japanese, quarter Filipinos, or quarter Korean, whatever. It is a real Asian mix. So as a faculty member I find that is a very unique teaching experience. It forces you to rethink how you teach and the way you teach because that is very different from mainland student populations that you get as a faculty member.

Another faculty stated that the geographic location of Mānoa, the richness of the Hawaiian host culture, and the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society would naturally make this university unique and different from other institutions. He further pointed out the significance of keeping cultural traditions and historical legacies.

Hawai‘i has challenges, economic and environmental challenges, that other places do not have. But it has resources and opportunities that some places don’t have. So a university that is actually nested and rooted here would naturally look and feel different than universities in Nebraska or NYU or Columbia. Would naturally look and feel different. So what about its uniqueness is important? I think the most important feature of our uniqueness is this strange kind of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society that has been created largely because the Hawaiian culture that was here first embraced and allowed that to happen. If Hawai‘i lose that kind of intercultural richness, it will be the biggest possible loss. But I don’t think it is going to happen because the Hawaiian programs are becoming stronger. Our curriculum really is about trying to recover those traditional kinds of activities, cultural practices, knowledge, and economic practices … People don’t have to sacrifice their cultural traditions and their historical legacies in order to become an astronomer or a researcher. That is what we teach our students. It does not matter where you are from, you don’t have to sacrifice your ancestry in order to be successful.

**Theme Four: Challenges Faced by Mānoa**

The theme of challenges faced by the university surfaced in conversations with six faculty members. They mentioned different challenges that Mānoa had to face and deal with, including Mānoa as a commuter school, variety of college preparation, diverse student body, physical and cultural isolation, being out of the mainstream, and an unfavorable job market in Hawai‘i.

One faculty member pointed out three kinds of challenges faced by Mānoa. Firstly, he mentioned that Mānoa was challenged by the variety of students’ college preparation.
We know that we have a tremendous variety of backgrounds in terms of the preparation of students. We have some undergraduate students that are extremely well-prepared for college, and they do very well, and we also have some students who come here who are not well-prepared to study at the college level.

Secondly, this faculty member stated that Mānoa was challenged by the diverse student body. The challenges include different ethnic backgrounds of students, English as a second language, and students from different countries in different stages of development.

I think that we do operate a little bit differently than other universities in the sense that we have such cultural diversity in our student body. So I think we are aware of the fact that students coming from different ethnic backgrounds have different ways of learning, or different challenges with learning...Our graduate programs are very international. So we have lots of students that come from a background where English is their second language. That presents some challenges. They also come from different countries and we can get a lot of different examples in different stages of development...So I think that our programs are affected by the fact that we have students from a really wide range of backgrounds. They bring to our classes the whole different set of experiences and perspectives. So I think the international aspect of our student body makes this a different kind of place than some places.

Thirdly, he talked about how Hawai‘i was isolated not just physically but also culturally, based on his work experience at Mānoa.

One of the challenges is that sometimes we have undergraduate students that want to go to graduate school, but they are reluctant to leave Hawai‘i. I find it is frustrating because, I think, they should go to the best universities they can get in to for the graduate program in economics and whatever. They should try to go to the best place, and in some cases the best place would be here, but in many cases it turns out to be a field that would be found somewhere else...I think that our students need to be willing to go out and find the best opportunities. The same thing with looking for jobs. I think that we want our kids to get the best jobs, whether that means to come back to Hawai‘i or to go to somewhere else.

Another faculty member mentioned that the challenges might exist in academic standards and recognition among peer institutions regarding Hawaiian language and knowledge.

We want to be recognized among all these other schools. But peer institutions have nothing to do with Hawaiian knowledge and Hawaiian language. They don’t care. How do we deal with that? I would say they have an obligation to seek all forms of knowledge, not just certain forms of knowledge. I don’t think they do, and that would be the angle I attack from. They hold up their own standards as seekers of knowledge, but disregard this knowledge.
Several faculty members mentioned that because Mānoa was a commuter school, classrooms were empty in the late afternoon and the campus was quiet after three o’clock.

There is a thing which is unique, but not necessarily a good thing, which is that Mānoa, at least for undergraduates, tends to be a commuter school. Students drive back and forth. It does not have as much as we call campus spirit in some other universities on the mainland. Students live in dorms, for instance. Mānoa is very, very quiet after three o’clock. This is a unique feature but not necessarily a good feature.

I don’t want to use the word unique, but it is a campus where students tend for one reason or another to get their classes done in the morning and get out whether it is for their jobs or going to beach. If you do go to other campuses, you will find things going on all day into the evening. Here everyone wants to get classes done early in the afternoon, and you will find a lot of classrooms empty in the late afternoon. That is a shame because I wish there was some incentive to make people want to be here all day.

One faculty member talked about challenges that graduates who wanted to search for jobs on the mainland faced and strategies to deal with them.

I say that it’s been a challenge for a lot of our graduates who are thought to be kind of out of the mainstream while looking for mainland for job seeking. It is a difficult challenge to compete. We are working on that, and thinking about ways to professionalize our graduates. They are going to be more competitive and not so grounded in only the local or the region. We are doing some course work, seminars, and workshops in how to be a little more aware of the challenges they are going to face if they want to leave. It is just a fact, and it is a challenge. It is not our fault. It is just a matter of history and other conditions that set that mainstream. But I think that there is strength that you can take confidence in what you have learned here, and then turn it to your energy in other places.

Another faculty member also mentioned that many Mānoa graduates left the island and went to the mainland to look for jobs. He is disappointed with this situation because, to him, the function of a university is to educate people who can stay and serve the local communities.

Another thing, I don’t know how true it is today. If students succeed, they do when they get their BA, MA, and PhD, my impression is still, maybe I am wrong, that a majority have to leave the state. They cannot get jobs here on the island. Their career forces them to go to the mainland where they maybe get jobs. That is a pity because you want to educate people to go back to the community. I know people who still don’t stay, and they have to leave because of that situation: career wise.
Conclusion

With the exception of the role of this university and a variety of challenges faced by Mānoa, the themes that emerged in the interviews were also found in the responses of the surveys from alumni, new students, and graduating students, as well as the entries of the Creative Arts Competition.

As one of the research projects on the Mānoa Experience, the Department Chair Interviews motivated interviewed faculty members to reflect on the meaning of Mānoa as a Hawaiian Place of Learning. Specifically, the interviews allowed faculty members to discuss their understanding of a Hawaiian Place of Learning and hopefully the discussions can help generate a shared vision of a Hawaiian Place of Learning on campus. Also, it gave the interviewees a chance to assess and reflect on the implementation of a Hawaiian Place of Learning in their departments and interactions with students. In addition, it provided faculty members with an opportunity to think about the unique features of Mānoa and discuss how these features are integrated into programs and campus life.