MEMORANDUM

TO: Peter Arnade
    Dean, Arts and Humanities

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock
      Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Your Response to the 2016 Program Review

August 16, 2016

Thank you for your response to the 2016 Program Review. I think that this was a very good Program Review following a very good visit, and it and your response taken together should set forward a number of key directions for the College in the years to come. Your response doesn’t contain as crisp an action plan for following up on these recommendations as you will need, but that can be the first agenda item that follows from this document.

The issues involving campus organization that this and the previous Program Review spend some time on, though important, do not fall into the category of things that the College can work on directly. One possible upside of the current moment of transition is that the question of whether Mānoa should move towards a Provost model has been explicitly posed by the President and may in fact actually be answered. But a possible downside is that these questions of structure crowd out focus on real work that needs to be done regardless of the structure of the campus.

There is agreement among the reviewers and yourself that the College is underfunded, and I wouldn’t dissent from this view myself. However, change will be incremental, and there are at least as many risks to existing base budgets as there are opportunities to expand those budgets. In this context, the decline of SSH and majors in A & H is extremely worrisome. You state that “a robust effort to being our SSH and number of majors up” is “a top priority.” I think this has to be the top priority, since without success in this area, everything else you are attempting to do will be much less likely to succeed. The Program Review urges attention to graduate student stipends, to additional faculty hiring, to obtaining a full-time development officer, and so on: each of these will be immeasurably easier to attend to if there is a rising circle of student enrollment and resources, but immeasurably more difficult if that circle continues its current downward spiral. The ideas contained in your response all make sense, but I suspect that they are more properly thought of as just the first few steps needed rather than a coherent and complete plan to address this issue. There are of course large social and political trends influencing these changes on our campus, but those trends should be a call to action, not a reason for acquiescence. We all believe that a robust education in the arts and humanities is essential for a life well lived and for a robust democracy, and we need to act on that belief.
I think virtually everything else in the Program Review depends on success on the enrollment and major front, but the importance of development, of connections with other colleges and schools, of developing a more cohesive identity for the college, of strengthening advising, of additional support for faculty research, for graduate students, and for undergraduate research should be obvious to all. These are issues that you didn’t need a Program Review to underscore the importance of, but the detailed suggestions in the report are certainly worth having and acting upon.

As you know, we expect a one-year progress report from the Dean reporting on what has been accomplished in terms of the Program Review’s recommendation. I expect that this one-year report will have a more detailed action plan than is contained here, and it is due to the OVCAA by September 1, 2017.

c: April Goodwin, Program Officer