University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Strategic Planning Working Group
Summary of Survey Results

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[The following is an excerpt from the *UHM Strategic Planning Working Group Survey Report*, pp. 49-51, summarizing the findings from an online campus survey which drew over 1300 respondents. Details of the findings which support these conclusions can be found in the full report at http://manoa.hawaii.edu/vision]

**Summary of Major Findings**

**Institutional Values**

As noted by one of the respondents in an open final question on the survey, the issue of values is difficult to address as the terms are somewhat ambiguous and hard to understand without context. However, when each highly ranked institutional value is placed within the findings from other questions, the sense of how these fit within the institutional context become clearer.

**Educational Effectiveness**

All ranked educational effectiveness as the highest value for the institution, yet this phrase appears rarely in open-ended response that were not specific to values. This may occur as questions used more common terminology of teaching and learning, programs and classes. Undergraduate, graduate, and professional education were all highly valued, and many indicated that a strength of UHM is in being the only place in the state with the breadth of programs and in many cases, the only place offering many disciplines. Many proposed that support structures (non-financial) be improved and enhanced to assure student retention and academic success.

Both faculty and alumni raised many questions about the preparedness and expectations of entering and future students, including perceptions that the state’s public education system is facing serious issues of its own that will result in lower quality.

**Excellence**

The issue of excellence arose in multiple contexts, and while it perhaps has different meaning across the campus, the overall findings suggest concerns with both continuing and growing the institution’s “quality” in people, education, research and community. Many commented on specific programs or departments that they note are already excellent. Students perceived that there were many excellent faculty but some were not good teachers. The areas of traditional research excellence in land, sea and space grant disciplines was cited frequently, as were the growing programs in Hawaiian studies. There is a sense of pride in UHM’s role in higher education in the state, quality research recognized nationally and internationally, support of arts and culture, and commitment to creating a diverse community (see below).

**Research**

While research held high value for most constituencies, it dropped to sixth among the student respondents in the survey, and even lower when considered only for undergraduate respondents. UHM is seen as being unique within the UH system because of its research focus, with respondents consistently noting the importance of research both in generating revenue for the institution and state, and as a critical need for the state because UH was in a unique position to research in specialist areas that would not be covered elsewhere.

**Sustainability**

Sustainability was highly ranked primarily by students in all the institutional value questions, and given the high proportion of student respondents, as a result was highly ranked value overall. But elements of this issue were found among all constituent groups across the multiple questions and responses, suggesting that the concerns are not limited a younger group or advocacy voice. The term represents many concepts for respondents, ranging from campus infrastructure development for efficiency to preservation of the state’s unique resources and beauty, and the issues of research to address global pollution, population growth and resource management. The responses consistently indicated that sustainability is closely related to a strong sense of place within the campus and to UHM’s location in an island archipelago with a unique natural and cultural heritage. Many comments about the campus physical plant and infrastructure improvements linked these not so much to aging facilities and
beautification but to the need to develop a more efficient campus. It was also seen in issues of operations and processes in terms of the ultimate sustainability of the institution.

**Trends as Environmental Threats and Opportunities**

Perhaps the most serious issue to arise since the 2002 UHM Strategic Plan, *Defining Our Destiny*, was the economic depression that has defined the past few years. The impacts of this on education in general, and more broadly the state and world, have raised concerns that were perhaps less obvious in better times. Many of the issues discussed across the many responses see the changed economy as both a threat to UHM’s future but also as an opportunity to review our foundations and potentials in new ways. Many interesting proposals arose in the responses about addressing declining state revenues and ensuring that the quality of UHM does not further decline. However, the respondents do not show consensus to solutions, highlighting gaps that planning efforts will need to consider.

**Access and Affordability**

Affordability was the top ranked issue facing UHM across all constituency groups except faculty. However, the more encompassing issue of access was found to be a concern among all groups responding to the survey. The high costs of higher education have been a media centerpiece that preceded the recent recession, and with the decline in income and public support, are a clear worry for many, whether currently attending or considering the impact on children and other family members in the future.

**Public Support for Education**

While declining revenues, both from the state to support higher education and through multiple sources to support research and development in higher education ranked highly, the concern over revenue can be seen to fall into a larger concerns for public support of education. Respondents noted that public education, whether K-12 or higher education, does not hold the esteem that is seen as having existed in the past. This was viewed from many vantage points with the most specific related the cuts made in state budgets for UHM.

The areas that this encompasses are complex. A large number of respondents indicated that UHM needs to do a much better job of outreach to the community, legislature and other political leaders, and to the K-12 community to tighten partnerships to promote education as well as focus on improving UHM’s responsiveness to state and local issues. Further, there is a general sense that UHM has not done enough to show how important a research university is to the state.

**Cross-cutting Issues**

Some areas that continually arose in respondent answers to open-ended questions did not always show up within the top ranks of quantitative frequencies from responses but were prevalent enough to warrant addressing as major areas of strategic interest. While the values are often common to many research-intensive universities, some of these cross-cutting issues are very specific to UHM and in some cases, are what make the it a special place of learning and diversity.

**Native Hawaiians and UHM**

Native Hawaiian issues did not rise to the top in quantitative responses but these were prevalent across all open ended questions. This appeared in terms of access and affordability, outreach, research and academic programs, and in terms of presence on campus and partnerships in the community. These responses came from all segments in addition to being a single-issue focus for approximately 80 respondents, primarily students and external community members. Most notably, the responses indicated that Hawaiian values and sense of place and community should not be limited to a specialized unit and program but were important to instill across UHM.

**Institutional Focus**

There was an overall theme in the responses that related to institutional focus, covering a variety of issues in terms of scope, purpose, and outlook. **Breadth of Programs**: Following in the path established by the Budget Priority process last year, a number of respondents indicated the need to focus and improve areas in which UHM excels. However, there is a lack of consensus among respondents as to where that focus might fall. While a number indicated traditional areas of land,
sea, and space grant institutions as well as Hawaiian studies (see above), there was equal concern that focus not decrease breadth of programs which is seen as an institutional advantage in a state without other research-intensive public universities. Many one-off responses urged support for a specific program or department, including ones in which a respondent specifically urged that something not be cut in the process of refining goals.

Globalization and Service to State/Community: Two issues that may be dichotomous but are not necessarily exclusive are whether the focus should be on state and community issues, or whether UHM should be seen as the gateway between the mainland and the Asia-Pacific region growing the importance of its global outlook. Sentiment was divided over whether more foreign students was a positive or negative impact, with some suggesting increases would help with revenues and quality.

Workforce Development: One area that did not emerge as a focus was that of workforce development. While this concept has been central in UH system goals, the terminology seems not to resonate with UHM stakeholders who view this as the role of the community colleges. In fact, there was at least some minor input that such a focus would decrease the quality of UHM and leave little to separate it from other UH system institutions. Further, such terminology is seen as purely centered in undergraduate or certificate programs. Yet there is significant support for professional programs, partnerships for economic development, consideration of increased internships, and even mention of developing 21st century skills. To some degree, this issue may be one of terminology and the classic differentiation between training and education as traditionally defined by higher education. This may be an area in which UHM must further define its specific role, and as mentioned in Public Support for Education (above), find ways to help both the internal and external community better understand the role the UHM plays in the state related to workforce development.

Leadership and Efficiency: An underlying theme was the need for greater efficiency in operations and the importance of quality leadership. Following concerns about the budget process and a perception of a growing and expensive administrative overhead, there were comments suggesting further examination of leadership structures and a set of responses very critical of leadership efforts. Many respondents commented that far too little has been done in terms of decreasing bureaucracy and streamlining administrative processes as a way to cut costs overall.

Community and Communications

One area that continually arose but was not specifically addressed in the initial questions was the issue of community and the importance of unity. What emerges from responses are that many take pride in their affiliation with UHM, and highly value participation in what is generally perceived as a diverse community, both through the mix of students from Hawaii’s many regions and cultural traditions as well as with those from mainland and international roots. The special place of Native Hawaiian culture and values was noted, along with a commitment to preserving what is unique both in the natural and cultural environments of the state. More than the term “place” that has frequently been used in official literature, the concept of community seemed to be what was seen as making UHM a special organization with a unique role of bridging the differences. This sense of community, and the importance of working together to address the issues facing UHM in the future, are something that is seen as setting the institution apart from other research-intensive institutions.

Technology

A final major cross-cutting theme was technology, with applications to almost every issue raised and a particular importance to communications across an island state. Many noted that online education has grown everywhere, and that competition is now possible where once UHM was a sole provider of advanced degrees and many disciplinary programs in Hawaii. Respondents urged the institution to upgrade technology infrastructure for teaching and administration, provide leadership in the state in technology applications, and partner with businesses to apply technology in economic development. The role of UHM as a bridge between the mainland U.S. and the Asia-Pacific region was viewed an potentially enhanced through technology. Technology is seen as a key in successfully facing the challenges of the coming decades and preparing exceptional graduates for the future.