

June 1, 2015

Dr. Robert Bley-Vroman
Chancellor
University of Hawaii at Manoa
2500 Campus Road
Honolulu, HI 96822

RE: WSCUC Interim Report, Spring 2015

Dear Chancellor Bley-Vroman:

At its meeting by conference call on May 21, 2015, a panel of the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) Interim Report Committee (IRC) convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by the University of Hawaii, Manoa (UHM) on March 1, 2015. The panel reviewed your Interim Report and the Commission letter of July 5, 2011.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with you, Reed Dasenbrock, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Wendy Pearson, Accreditation Liaison Officer, Yang Zhang, Institutional Research Director, Monica Stitt-Berg, Assessment Specialist, and Clifton Tanabe, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor. The conversation was very informative and helped the panelists better understand the progress the institution has made in addressing the areas cited in the Commission letter.

The panel was extremely impressed with UHM's Interim Report: it was well structured, clearly focused, comprehensive, and self-reflective. The panel also praised the considerable improvement that has taken place since the Educational Effectiveness Review in 2011: establishment of a robust infrastructure for ongoing assessment, with a strategic emphasis on building capacity first centrally and then building capacity within the faculty; meaningful and substantive involvement of senior leadership in issues of student success; innovative strategies to strengthen student success resulting in higher completion rates; and continued thoughtful stewardship of the educational needs of the state of Hawaii.

The July 5, 2011 Commission letter identified several areas that required attention and further development by UHM: articulating undergraduate student learning outcomes; raising undergraduate retention and graduation rates; reflecting on changes resulting from the 2011-2015 strategic plan; and continuing to enhance the university as a Hawaiian Place of Learning. The Interim Report Committee noted significant progress in each of these areas.

- a. Student learning outcomes.** Through a faculty driven process, UHM has defined undergraduate Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and has mapped General Education outcomes, the WSCUC core competencies, and departmental Program Learning Outcomes against those ILOs. Steps are underway to systematically assess the WSCUC five core competencies, and the process will be completed in 2018. The panel praised UHM for the widespread involvement of faculty in developing, aligning and assessing student learning outcomes. The panel also commended UHM for its well-crafted assessment process. (CFRs 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.1, 4.3)
- b. Retention, graduation and completion.** The panel praised the strategies UHM has put in place to bolster retention and completion rates, including creation of a Committee on Student Engagement, Retention and Graduation chaired by the VC Academic Affairs; establishment of a Council of Academic Advisors to coordinate advising efforts; clarification of four year degree plans for all students; improved articulation efforts with community colleges; investments in gateway courses to expand the number of seats available; curriculum "angioplasty" to identify where blockages are and ways to move students through the curriculum more easily; detailed data analyses to pinpoint where the challenges lie (e.g., out-of-state students); improvements in housing and financial aid; strengthening of the degree audit system; and a philosophical approach that aims to help all groups graduate rather than focusing on a specific subgroup. As a result of these efforts, retention and completion rates have rapidly improved. (CFRs 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1)

- c. Strategic plan.** The panel appreciated the detailed, candid, self-reflective information about the university's strategic plan. UHM provided good evidence of the activities undertaken related to the four goals of the plan. UHM also described its new strategic plan (2015-2021), which addresses weaknesses in the last plan and will be aligned with systemwide goals. The new strategic plan is expected by December 2015. (CFRs 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
- d. Hawaiian Place of Learning.** The university has made progress in implementing the 2012 task force report recommendations supporting UHM as a Hawaiian Place of Learning. The proportion of Native Hawaiian students and number of degrees granted are increasing, although graduation rates lag other groups. Native Hawaiian faculty are also increasing and expanding to new departments, but represent 6% of the faculty. The panel noted that the Hawaiian collection of the library is a wonderful resource and that the program enhancements in the curriculum are positioning UHM as the leader in the study of native languages, culture and history of Hawaii. (CFRs 1.1, 1.4, 4.7)

After discussion of the progress that has been made by UHM in addressing areas cited by the Commission, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report.
2. Require no further interaction with WSCUC until the time of UHM's Mid-Cycle Review (scheduled for spring 2016) and its comprehensive review (Offsite Review scheduled for fall 2020; Accreditation Visit scheduled for spring 2021).
3. Recommend that UHM include in its institutional report for its comprehensive review an update on:
 - a. Student learning outcomes: results of the assessment of undergraduate institutional learning outcomes and a description of how the data have been used to improve student learning. (CFRs 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.1, 4.3)
 - b. Undergraduate retention, graduation and completion rates: the most recent data, aggregated and disaggregated by variables of interest to the university; plans to strengthen retention and graduation rates. (CFRs 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 4.1)
 - c. Strategic plan: changes in the university as a result of the 2015-2021 strategic plan. (CFRs 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
 - d. Hawaiian Place of Learning: progress in enhancing the university as a Hawaiian Place of Learning. (CFRs 1.1, 1.4, 4.7)

The panel, again, reaffirms the hard work and important steps that UHM has taken to address the issues that were the focus of the Commission letter. The Interim Report Committee looks forward to the institution's continued progress.

I am available to help in any way that I can. If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gross Davis, Ph.D.
Vice President

cc: Wendy Pearson, ALO
Members of the Interim Report Committee