

September 3, 2004

Dear members of the UH Hilo community,

As you must have heard by now, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges has reaffirmed the accreditation of UH Hilo and has found the institution to be in such sound condition that we have been placed on a ten-year review cycle. The next comprehensive visits from WASC will occur in Spring 2013 and Spring 2014. Prior to 2013, we will have a special visit in 2008.

In effect, we have received an "A" for progress. In his June 25, 2004, action letter, WASC Senior Commission Executive Director Ralph Wolff commends the University for "its bold vision of service to the Hawaiian community and for its progress in transforming. . . itself from a liberal arts college to a comprehensive university that serves the workforce needs of Hawaii." In addition, the university has been addressing the long-standing concerns of WASC and substantial progress has been made in all of them.

Such progress has been possible only because of the dedication, hard work, and collaboration of many members of the UH Hilo community, beginning with the many who participated in the 2000-2001 self study. Their work laid the foundation for changes in longstanding processes and policies and for new ones. The chairs of these committees were: Educational Programs, Sandra Wagner-Wright and Harry Hennessey; Educational and Human Resources, Robert Fox and Alton Okinaka; Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Programs, Barbara Heintz; Physical and Financial Resources, John Whittaker; Assessment, April Komenaka; and Steering Committee, Helen Rogers and April Komenaka.

Since 2001 many campus committees and units have worked steadily and productively to enhance our institutional and educational effectiveness. I wish to mention in particular the Office of Institutional Research, led by Director Lynne Stamoulis; the Office of Student Affairs, led by Vice Chancellor Keith Miser and Director of Student Development James Mellon; the Strategic Plan Review Committee, chaired by Helen Rogers; and the Congress Assessment Support Committee, chaired for its first two years by Nina Buchanan.

We have our work cut out for us. In its action letter (<http://www.uhh.hawaii.edu/uhh/vcaa/documents/WASCCommissionLetterJuly2004.pdf>), the Commission outlined four areas of concern that we must address. A special visit in Spring 2008 will assess our progress in these areas in particular:

1. Mission, planning, and institutional resources. In brief, the Commission recommends, UH Hilo should "continue its efforts to

attract external funding . . . and make certain that the anticipated enrollment growth does not occur at the expense of currently enrolled students or already thriving programs." The UH System, at the same time, must establish "a set of priorities for development among and within campuses" as well as a financial plan.

2. Institutional governance and organizational structure. "The team concluded....by leaving the faculty senates in place, the University continued to foster the redundancy in governance functions. The team also observed that the University's academic administrative structure was weighed in the direction of the College of Arts and Sciences." The university is urged to "monitor the operations of its senates and faculty congress and to evaluate the effectiveness of the two-tiered system. . . .[T]he University will be responsible to demonstrate that it has established and operates with effective governance and administration."
3. Diversity. While the University enjoys a rich diversity in its student population and has many programs in place to foster that diversity and to support under-represented student groups, it lacks plans to improve "diversity of its faculty and staff and [to diffuse] through its curriculum the key learnings and insights that have made its Hawaiian program a worldwide exemplar."
4. Educational effectiveness. The Commission observes that "efforts to implement assessment initiatives have not yet reached the level of campus-wide engagement. . . . [M]uch work remains to be done with the general education initiative. Likewise, a solution for the problem of students who are ill-prepared in mathematics will need to be found."

April Komenaka, Chair of the Accreditation Steering Committee, played a pivotal role in the preparation and submission of the Institutional Proposal, the Institutional Capacity and the Educational Effectiveness Reports. Furthermore, the campus represented by all of you, demonstrated its strength and openness and completed the three-year process successfully. **The recognition from WASC goes to each one of you.** With the continuing cooperation and commitment of faculty, staff, and students, the projects for improvement begun during the institutional review of 2002-2004 will continue – first and foremost because we want UH Hilo to achieve its own goals and objectives in the most effective ways possible.

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