



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

April 10, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Deans and Directors

FROM: Neal Smatresk
Vice Chancellor
for Academic Affairs 

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Initiatives

As part of our continuing WASC program review process, we have been studying strategies to improve our graduation and retention rates at UHM. Early indications are we lag behind comparable peer institutions in national graduation and retention rates, especially between the sophomore and junior years.

Several major long-term strategies are being developed, however, two “best practices” identified by many institutions can begin now. First, all freshmen and sophomores will receive mandatory academic advising before registering for their next semester. This will allow all students an opportunity to work with an academic adviser in addressing career paths and long-range goals. The practice will require additional staffing in some colleges, so this recommendation will be implemented over a two-year period, with full implementation in place by Spring 2008.

The second recommendation will impact some schools/colleges more than others. All entering freshmen students will have to declared an academic major by the end of their 2nd semester sophomore year. Students without a declared major will not be allowed continuing registration. Transfer students will be allowed two semesters here at UHM before having to declare an academic major. This recommendation will increase early inquires from students about majors and hopefully contribute to faculty and students engaging in meaningful conversations earlier in their academic careers. We realize that some students will still want to change their majors, and we encourage students to seek the most meaningful academic major, however, we feel by establishing deadlines, graduation can become a more predictable event. We are requiring this recommendation to be fully in place by Spring 2008, or sooner wherever possible.

These two initiatives alone will not succeed in addressing all of our concerns regarding graduation and retention rates. We will shortly be announcing other initiatives that we

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believe can move us toward creating the undergraduate experience we all seek for our students.

I am requesting that all schools/colleges submit to Assistant Vice Chancellor Ron Cambra (Krauss 22) your plan for how you will implement these two initiatives over the next two years. Please detail the expectations for each semester as you go forward, including a description of the assessment tools you will use to evaluate progress. Deadline for your submission is June 1, 2006. If you have any questions regarding these initiatives, please call Dr. Cambra at 956-8844 or email him at cambra@hawaii.edu.

Thank you for your interest and support.

c: Interim Chancellor Konan
Vice Chancellor Ostrander
Assistant Vice Chancellor Cambra