



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

MEMORANDUM

November 13, 2012

To: Reed Dasenbrock
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
10858

FROM: Ronald E. Cambra
Assistant Vice Chancellor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronald E. Cambra', written over the printed name.

SUBJECT: Response External Review Report

The External Review Report (ERR) of the Office of Undergraduate Education contains a range of positive comments reflecting the work of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA), the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education (AVCUE), the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE), and the units in OUE. The task of the External Review Team was complicated because not all of the units in OUE were reviewed. Some units mentioned in the ERR were not part of the self-study; e.g., academic advising, the STAR office, and the enrollment management initiatives, including recruitment. Yet all of these units or initiatives were discussed in the review.

The report recognizes numerous accomplishments of OUE units. High praise is given to the student degree audit system, STAR, a system which was designed and built at UHM, and is currently employed throughout the entire University of Hawai'i System. STAR has transformed the entire undergraduate advising strategy for both advisers and students. Two aspects of STAR recognized in the ERR are the ability to integrate articulated courses throughout the UH System and the ability to reflect how courses address the 4-year academic plans for every major on campus into a functional step-by-step academic process.

The ERR criticized the current administrative structure as too "granular," "too flat and distributive, too finely divided—and overall not sufficiently coordinated." The OUE at UHM is a collection of units addressing various campus wide aspects of the first two years of the undergraduate experience. Not all offices share common responsibilities. For example, one office is focused on developing technology to support student success but does not do advising. Another office delivers the catalog, but also has responsibility for maintaining our 4-year academic plans. Three offices focus on academic advising, but four other offices focus on courses and degree programs while also offering advising within their units. Keeping a central focus for all of the OUE offices is a constant challenge. The structure in place is flexible and allows all of the units to work together where possible. Simply put, it works, and has enough structure to allow excellent units to excel, and challenged units to receive the support they need to address their mission statements.

All of the OUE offices submit a year-end report identifying a mission statement, assessment data, and goals for the next year. During the summer, the AVCUE meets and reviews each report with the unit director and chair so everyone has a clear idea of their tasks. It is clear however, that several units are struggling to maintain the goals they have set for themselves in their annual reports and need more attention, or as suggested in the ERR, a review as to whether they would benefit from combining and/or re-organizing. This is a useful suggestion, and this semester, the AVCUE will be studying possible areas that could be more coordinated or collaboratively done.

OUE currently meets collectively every month with all its units. OUE also maintains an open door policy with all units, directors and chairs, and it is not uncommon for the Assistant Vice Chancellor to schedule individual meetings with unit heads weekly, or more frequently, depending upon the need. The units receive a great deal of feedback at these meetings on whether or not they are addressing their missions effectively.

The other administrative comment regards processing requests and university paperwork. The UH System is implementing several new major administrative systems which will require extensive directors, chairs, and staff training. Our administrative officer is instituting a series of internal OUE meetings in addition to the campus-wide training that all administrators must attend to ensure each unit is adequately trained.

The ERR argues there is room for consolidating programs. The model of the Honors Program and the Undergraduate Research effort is, the ERR argues, an example of taking the strength of a program and using it as an influence in building a new initiative. The ERR recommendation to combine the Student Success Center, the Writing Center, and the tutoring programs, including the Learning Assistance Center, will be the heart of a proposal the OUE will make before the end of the fall semester after some university examples at other institutions are studied.

Academic advising on the UHM campus is college based, except for the Manoa Advising Center, the Pre-Health and Pre-Law Advising Center, Student Athlete Academic Services, and soon to be Mānoa Transfer Center. Appointing a Head Adviser to oversee these four office operations at this time has merit since all of these populations are primarily involved with first semester students on campus, and all deal with retention and graduation issues. OUE will advance a proposal for consideration by the VCAA in the spring semester.

The term "laissez-faire" was used by the AVCUE to describe the campus culture when OUE was first established. It appears in the ERR. The main focus at that time was simply for students to get by with as little effort as possible. The campus culture has changed significantly since then with students now actively using STAR; the four year academic plans; mandatory advising as an accepted process used to assist students in making course selections to support their graduation goals; and the engaged conversations that have been happening in the campus center around the new "Do It in 4!" initiative. All demonstrate a more actively engaged UHM student. These initiatives have also created a culture in which long discussed, but not acted upon, academic policies have been upgraded. These policies

include the number of credits minimally required for graduation, the suspension of academic action until a student has attempted a minimum of twenty four credits, and a new revised academic grade replacement policy that will assist students through challenging gate courses.

The central OUE theme of nearly all of our campus' recent endeavors has been "active student engagement." This theme has put a heavy emphasis on partnerships and stewardships. OUE has advanced the notion that all players in the undergraduate experience must perceive themselves as active partners in the academic journey of our students, and we must assist, engage, suggest, answer, and work to create a culture of positive involvement.

The other key theme is stewardship. In addition to being partners, the stewardship of the campus is also critical to our endeavor. Every student must perceive this campus as their campus—it is their home away from home, a factor in their identity, a part of the cornerstone of their personal and professional development—and that can only happen if they feel a stewardship with the campus. Our goal, simply put, is to help students realize their personal and professional goals by extending an invitation for active partnership, a life-long commitment to academic excellence, and the campus identity as stewards of the campus.

Several additional portions of the ERR require comment. The First Year Program (FYP) is an excellent example of full student involvement. FYP has expanded to include the Freshmen Registration Project, the Sophomore Year Experience, and the Financial Literacy Program. These programs share much in common and will continue to expand and grow. UHM has a rich history of working with Learning Communities, and at one time, we developed what the report calls "intentional connections between classes in the clusters and thus provide a shared intellectual learning experience for the students." Confederated learning communities were developed on this campus and began to take shape with increased faculty commitment and interest. The VCAA at that time, had budgeted a fund to support the endeavor, and at the height of the faculty expansion into confederated communities, it was one of the first items cut entirely in a balance budget cutting effort. We have not re-visited the model since that event.

There is an argument, and one I accept based on my twenty years of experience working with learning communities, that confederated learning communities can be successful primarily at small, liberal arts institutions where an integrated education built on interdisciplinary thinking can exist. The strengths of academic disciplines and the emphasis on tenure and promotion within disciplines make confederated learning communities a very difficult sale on research campuses. The direction OUE has chosen, with the development of a one credit peer mentor course, works at UHM. The goal is to expand the linked experience to allow more students into the learning community and increase their academic activity. The ERR also suggested that the First Year Program pursue Freshmen Seminars (FS) as another alternative. UHM has a long history of using FS, starting in the resident halls, however, the results have been mixed at best. In units with

extremely dedicated individuals, the model works, but currently only one unit on campus continues to offer FS, and the model used is not what is often proposed at other institutions. For the time being, while we expand our learning communities in the First Year Program and Resident Halls, our focus and energy will be best spent on improving the quality and use of our linked courses and the one credit peer mentor course. Perhaps as the FYP expands, the FS model can be revisited in another more effective outreach model, but not for the near future.

The ERR devotes almost an entire page to advising on the UHM campus pointing out the importance and the basic need for more advisers. It makes a case for more professional academic advisers in key academic offices, but it underestimates the case for the peer mentor program and the role of the Council of Academic Advisers (CAA). The concept of training peer mentors to provide basic advising under the supervision of experienced academic advisers was new to the review team members. The review team was also impressed with the campus-wide CAA and their role to strengthen and improve academic policies on this campus. The development of STAR, the formation of the 4-year academic plans, and now the push with "Do it in 4!" all find strength from a coordinated and integrated advising unit demonstrated by CAA.

The issue of centralizing the supervision of advising has already happened in a self-policing manner through CAA. It is not entirely clear if UHM would be able to provide high quality advising as a centralized office versus a council of head academic advisers working together to develop consistent and common guidelines on nearly all of the major academic policy issues we have faced over the last seven years. The AVCUE attends all of the CAA meetings and collaborates in identifying common goals and academic policies that require examination. Thus far, the model works and we will continue working together.

The Honors Program has enjoyed a new resurgence with an infusion of new capital. For Honors, this new funding has allowed it to act on previous recommendations made by an earlier taskforce. The interest of the administration to develop and support the program has allowed the hiring of new office staff, an academic adviser (with an approval to hire a second) and the development of a new Honors Faculty cohort committed to teaching, advising and guiding our Honors students. This is exciting! Honors has also taken under its wing the Undergraduate Research endeavor, which has been highly anticipated and very receptive by many undergraduate students. Some issues continue with getting research funds to all students but those have primarily been resolved.

Another unit specifically mentioned in the report is our Service Learning program. This program has brought in fairly large grants, and this year will oversee a new \$500,000 UHM scholarship based on service. The unit operates in cramped quarters and does not have adequate staffing for the size of its operation. Hopefully, this ERR will stimulate a broad discussion about the role of service learning in the undergraduate experience and support much needed positions and financial resources.

Two other programs recognized in the ERR are Army ROTC (AROTC) and Air Force ROTC (AFROTC). Both programs have recently received national acclaim. Army cadets continue to place in the top ten in the nation in Ranger Training, and AFROTC was ranked as the #1 Detachment of 140 college detachment units in the United States. However, both units need more physical support. While AROTC operates in a permanent facility, it still requires constant upkeep because of the age of the building. AFROTC is in a temporary building which has become a “permanent” building. However, the facility is poorly air-conditioned, very noisy, very dusty, and difficult to maintain, especially its storage area which contains uniforms and equipment used by the unit in training. Several other major challenges exist with both units that we will address this year, including parking for off campus cadets.

A final unit mentioned in the ERR is our Interdisciplinary Studies Program. As a result of the report, a subsequent list of recommendations has been made to the VCAA, and is being evaluated as this report is being written. All of the concerns voiced in the ERR are addressed, to some extent, in the list of recommendations.

A challenge of all External Program Review teams is to accurately understand the structure and goals of the unit or units being reviewed. OUE does conduct monthly unit meetings, and these meetings are very well attended. Every OUE unit is required to submit an annual report, and copies of the annual report dating back five years are available in the OUE. The units are required to turn in their annual reports by late June and meetings are held between the Assistant Vice Chancellor and each unit head before the beginning of the academic year.

The ERR concludes that Undergraduate Education is “significantly underfunded and has significantly deficient physical space both in quantity and quality.” I agree. An assessment of the adequacy of OUE’s budget in relation to its responsibilities and campus goals is long overdue. Subsequently, significant deficits in physical space in Honors, Mānoa Advising Center, the Pre-Health and Pre-Law Advising Center, the AFROTC program, and the Office of Undergraduate Education beg for an assessment and action plan.

ERR offered seven recommendations. Some of the recommendations are directed to OUE and others to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Recommendation One: strengthen administrative structures. All of our Organization Plans contain clear definitions of leadership and communication lines of reporting, and accountability. Currently, all units reporting to the OUE meet at least once a month, and the Assistant Vice Chancellor maintains a very open calendar for any unit director or chair that wishes to meet. OUE does require an end of the year report and assessment, and those will be continued, with scheduled meetings as part of that process. This year with all year-end reports filed, the Assistant Vice Chancellor is meeting with each unit director or chair to review the last year and preview the new academic year. No administrative additional structure is required or requested at this time.

Recommendation Two: define and publicize the retention and graduation rate achievements and goals with reports on all units. The unit with the responsibility to accomplish this task is the Mānoa Institutional Research Office (MIRO). MIRO reports directly to the VCAA, and this strategy has already been initiated.

Recommendation Three: make adequate advising a priority across all student cohorts. Adequate academic advising is the highest priority of the OUE. Several units on campus have increased the number of advisers in their colleges by re-allocating positions. The Chancellor has also agreed to expand our transfer advising program, and three new positions are being allocated to that endeavor. OUE has strongly supported and assisted with the development of the peer advising mentoring program as another method to reach out to students, and this program has grown over the last two years. Finally, the OUE and CAA has continued to analyze the adviser to student ratio in academic advising offices with the hope of eventually being able to place more advising in high adviser to student ratio offices when funding becomes available.

Recommendation Four: improve academic control of decision-making. The recommendation calls to “adjust administrative and budgeting structures to direct increased funding to undergraduate education.” Obviously, our office whole heartily supports and endorses this recommendation. The AVCUE will work closely with the VCAA to put together a priority listing of budget needs.

Recommendation Five: improve the facilities occupied by undergraduate students and programs. The statement in the ERR is that “the design and quality of physical space communicates what the University values; characteristics of physical space model and motivate the behavior of those who use the space – students, faculty and staff.” OUE has been working with the VCAA and the Library to identify additional space for expansion in the Student Success Center in Sinclair Library to address this recommendation.

Recommendation Six: organize space so that programs with related missions can more easily collaborate, share support staff, and make efficient use of supplies and equipment. Plans are being developed to propose the 2nd floor of Sinclair Library to bring together the Manoa Advising Center, the Pre-Law and Pre-Health Center, the new Manoa Transfer Advising Center, the Honors Program and the Office of Undergraduate Education.

Recommendation Seven: minimize current practices where understaffed units employ highly trained individuals to devote substantial work time to routine staff/student functions such as distributing leaflets, scheduling appointments, and answering telephone calls. Most of our advising offices do not have adequate support staff to perform office functions, thus units use student assistants as necessary.

11.14.12 c: K Aune
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