MEMORANDUM

TO: Brennon Morioka, Dean, College of Engineering
FROM: Michael Bruno, Provost
Laura Lyons, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Krystyna Aune, Dean of Graduate Division

SUBJECT: College of Engineering Graduate Program Review Response from Administration

Mahalo for your thorough response to the January 2021 program review report. We are pleased with the progress already reported and with the plans to address so many of the recommendations made by the team. Specifically,

- We are happy to hear that you have plans underway to restructure the composition of the Dean’s Council to involve a more diverse array of community members and that you are engaged in discussions in the economic sector regarding technology and innovation.
- The College has nearly 50% of all of the campus’ BAM pathway program participants! Congratulations on the early and successful efforts to launch these pathways! Exploring new tracks within the MS programs and the BAM pathways may help attract even more students. We will work with you as plans around these tracks or new certificate programs begin to crystalize.
- The collaborations with SOEST on Material Science and Engineering and with CTAHR on BioEngineering are encouraged. We would like to discuss further this “co-hosting” of an Agricultural Engineering program proposal. The proposed plan for an Ocean Engineering BS to feed into the MS in ORE via a BAM pathway is sound.
- Regarding graduate student support, we recognize that the main source and resource typically falls to the Graduate Program Chair and in some departments to a graduate program assistant or secretary. Some programs have graduate student organizations that facilitate the peer mentoring and social support. We see the list of student clubs and organizations on your new website. Is there active engagement by students in these clubs? Relatedly, the common space (Holmes Hall 389A) for student chapters may (post-pandemic) provide an important opportunity for student collaboration and peer-support. Ensuring that the student handbooks and webpages are informative and kept up-to-date is a critical component to student success. Professional and individual development opportunities are made available centrally by Graduate Division and posted on its website as well as on the academic calendar (https://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/). Selected campus resources are also posted on the Graduate Division website: https://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/selected-campus-resources/. The co-mentoring system you describe sounds intriguing – is the general mentor going to be assigned or selected by the student, as presumably occurs for the research advisor? We would appreciate updates regarding the effectiveness of this model as well as how the internal co-advising system is working.
We understand that there can be disparities in the stipend levels of extramurally funded RA appointments. The college could institute, however, a higher minimum step for TA appointments while also allowing for step increases for TAs based on experience/seniority.

Efforts to connect students to funding are extraordinarily helpful at the program, department, college, and campus level. Funding opportunities are also made available by Graduate Division via the website and via announcements and social media: https://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/fellowships-scholarships/.

We also acknowledge the concerns regarding insufficient administrative support. The new grants development specialist position as well as the new fiscal administrator recruitment should ease the burdens somewhat. The grant training and resource webpage should demonstrably increase grant activity and success. We’d like to hear more about the automatizing of the advising workload activities and what the videos will contain.

The large-scale efforts to pursue collaborations with industry and other institutions is encouraged and will continue inform and enrich the research and instructional activities of the College.

We encourage collaboration with other Departments, Schools/Colleges on curriculum and program development for innovative, cross-disciplinary purposes as well as to increase instructional efficiency. There is concern about the availability of key graduate courses and mentoring availability with the loss of faculty members. In the near-term, some curricular flexibility may be necessary.

Branding, marketing, and consistent/dedicated social media activity, up-to-date and informative webpages regarding programs (their requirements, faculty research activity, alumni testimonials, etc.), faculty engagement in meetings and in the community and in response to prospective student queries are demonstrably important and effective in the recruitment of graduate students. We applaud your investment in these activities as well as the international engagement (now done virtually by necessity).

We are happy to hear about the collaborations with the EAAUH and the central alumni and current student database that was created. The efforts to engage with industry and employer partners will also play a key role in evaluating the success of the graduate program curriculum and requirements.

We also applaud the efforts to optimize and consolidate space for its appropriate use and the ongoing monitoring that will be necessary. We hope the consolidation of uses can also facilitate greater collaborations and efficiencies.

We appreciate the earnestness in which you have engaged in the program review process and moreover, all of your hard work and commitment to improve these important graduate programs. We look forward to getting updates regarding enrollment trends and outcomes of your continued efforts. The one-year progress report will be due on April 1, 2022.