

1-year progress Report: College of Natural Sciences Program Review July 2023

This report provides a 1-year progress update on the College of Natural Sciences (CNS) program review, which was conducted in Fall 2021. A response to the program review report was submitted in Spring 2022, to which the Provost provided a response in July 2022. Below, we address the points raised in the July 12, 2022 response memo from the Provost and provide updates on the recommendations of the review committee report.

Advising Workload: In AY22-23 we were successful in recruiting three new APT advisors to the CNS Student Academic Success Center, which greatly alleviated the issues of advising workload. Unfortunately, two of three hires have since moved on to other roles (both opting to pursue different career paths). However, we are excited to welcome new advisors to the team (one started in April 2023, and the second in June 2023). Restoration of the advising team to the pre-pandemic level of five APT advisors has enabled the team to move forward from “survival mode” to one of developing new initiatives to support CNS students. We are grateful for the support from UHM to enable this hiring.

CNS undergraduate enrollment has increased 15% since Fall 2019, and with almost 2,500 majors we need to continue to look at ways to provide sufficient academic support. We have added a casual hire employee to the advising team as of late spring 2023, but may need to consider adding a sixth advisor if enrollments continue to increase.

Climate Surveys: The Dean’s Office team developed climate surveys for CNS undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and postdoctoral fellows in the Spring of 2023. These will be administered throughout the College in early Fall 2023. Although the original intention was to survey CNS constituents in AY22-23, we decided to defer to fall given the abrupt need to move the entire CNS Dean’s Office in Spring 2023, which diverted effort from other activities.

Strategic Planning: As mentioned in the Provost’s response, the results of the climate surveys will be valuable for informing decision-making of many aspects of the College’s future directions, including new strategic directions. We have begun mapping out the process for strategic planning in CNS by investigating different approaches to this process in different colleges at UHM, and are working during Summer 2023 to be able to engage with all units in CNS on this important activity when faculty return to duty in August. CNS departments will also concurrently engage with this process to develop vision and direction for their individual units within the context of the CNS strategic directions.

Collaborative efforts: Efforts to pursue collaborations with industry, other institutions, and other units at UHM are ongoing. In terms of curricular collaboration, we have established two 4+1 programs (BAPs) with the College of Education; one with the BA Biology, and one for the BA Math, to prepare STEM students for teaching licensure in the State of Hawaii. Two new programs are being proposed and developed through Information & Computer Sciences that will foster industry connections for students and working professionals: a Professional MS degree (for working professionals) and a Graduate Certificate in CS. CNS is actively participating in both the Health Sciences and Space Sciences initiatives at UHM, through which we will further develop collaborative relationships with other units at UHM and jointly develop new research, instructional, and community opportunities. Most recently, we are

participants in the Fisheries cluster hire, and look forward to jointly developing this important program at UHM.

Graduate Assistant Salaries: The comparatively low graduate student salaries in CNS were discussed as a major issue impacting recruitment and retention to graduate programs, and the ability to staff undergraduate laboratory sections. As of August 1, 2023, the UHM-wide GA minimum will be Step 12 (\$22,140 for 9-month GAs, and \$25,908 for 11-month GAs). While inequity still remains with respect to the differential between CNS GA salaries and those of STEM ORUs (SOEST and IfA), this increase is a welcome step toward addressing the cost of living challenges for CNS graduate assistants.

Fundraising and Development: We have been working with UH Foundation to identify and hire a development officer for CNS since our previous officer left in 2022. We are hopeful that a new hire will be brought on board shortly, and we can resume the efforts that were underway to develop the donor base for the College. In the meantime, we have successfully continued our “Pilina Ao” webinar series, which showcases faculty research from across CNS and IfA, as a means of fostering connection with current members of CNS and alumni.

Establishment of Blue-Ribbon Faculty Committee (for input on strategic directions), Faculty Steering Committee (to foster communication between faculty and CNS leadership), and an External Advisory Board (to improve fundraising and outreach to alumni and the community):

Establishment of a Blue-Ribbon Faculty Committee will be part of this upcoming academic year’s strategic planning process, whereby we will engage multiple groups across the College for ideas and feedback on the future directions of CNS. Over the last two years we have made some efforts to set up a CNS Faculty Senate (which would fill the role of the “Faculty Steering Committee”) - the process has been slow for multiple reasons, but we are continuing the process this coming academic year. We were working with our previous UHF development officer to establish an External Advisory Board for the College, but progress on this has stalled since the departure of our development officer. However, we are anxious to resume the process of setting up this group, and look forward to having a new development officer join us soon, which will be necessary to have the right “reach” to external candidates for the Board.