

Campus Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The State of Hawai'i instituted a lockdown during the week of March 16, 2020. Although higher education was labelled an essential activity and therefore exempt from many of the restrictions, we immediately ordered that all work that could be performed from home would be performed from home. We also immediately pivoted the delivery of our courses from almost entirely in-person to almost entirely online, with the exception of instruction that needed to be delivered in-person – primarily our medical and healthcare practicums and a number of science and engineering laboratories.

This abrupt change in everything from our instruction to our research and service in the community, not to mention the planning for commencement and other events (e.g. sports), required expertise and understanding across a range of disciplines. Fortunately, virtually all of the necessary expertise existed on our campus. In order to guide the university through these massive changes in how we conduct our business, the Provost created 8 Working Teams in various areas of concern, including 1) Health and Wellness; 2) Student Learning; 3) Student and Residence Life; 4) Space Planning, Preparation and Utilization; 5) Research; 6) New First-Time Students; 7) Business Processes; and 8) Communication. These Working Teams met very frequently from the start, addressing needs such as training for faculty moving to online instruction; the distribution of computers and internet hot spots to students, faculty, and staff; the development of health and wellness guidelines in an ongoing way as more information became available on everything from mask wearing to deep cleaning to mental health assistance. The COVID-19 Guidelines are posted online and regularly updated for the campus community. Daily meetings of UH Mānoa and UH System leadership began immediately, for the purpose of developing and coordinating actions, policies, and messaging. This was a time of an intense coming together of the campus community, with faculty and students assisting one another, and staff providing seemingly round-the-clock support as we moved all processes to electronic and navigated a multitude of issues with creativity and innovation. We also stepped up our presence and our impact in the community. Our medical, nursing, public health and social work faculty and students were on the front line (and still are), providing direct assistance to patients and residents in need, as well as advice to State and local officials.

Our enrollment did not suffer during academic year 2021. Despite our courses being offered almost entirely online (greater than 85%), our students returned, and we welcomed one of the larger first-time, first-year student classes in our history. Some of this was undoubtedly a result of more local high school graduates choosing to stay close to home. The university continued its work to improve

both the training and the supporting technology to improve online instruction. In addition to federal assistance to students in need, we developed a donor-supported fund to help our neediest students with costs associated with food, housing, etc. We developed several measures, including in-person seminar courses, to ensure that our international students would not be adversely affected by changes to Federal policies related to international students. As the year unfolded, it became very clear that the pandemic was going to have a disastrous effect on the State's economy, with negative impacts to our students and their families, as well as the State's ability to support the university.

The looming fiscal crisis caused us to enact, in the Spring of 2020, a strict freeze on all hiring across the UH Mānoa campus, as well as a freeze on travel, equipment purchases, and other purchases over \$25,000. In the summer of 2020, we announced a planning initiative that we termed the Planning for Post-Pandemic Hawai'i, with the goal of configuring UH Mānoa to help lead Hawai'i through the greatest financial and health crises of our lifetimes and to advance the development of a strong, diversified economy while providing essential support and services to our communities. The process was undertaken in the context of the four major themes that define the UH Mānoa Strategic Plan:

- Becoming a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning
- Enhancing Student Success
- Excellence in Research
- Building a sustainable and resilient campus environment

In May, 2020 a team was assembled to assist in the program-level review of each academic unit with the aim of gathering the essential information to assist the academic unit leaders in addressing the following questions:

- List the programs within your unit that you consider of the highest quality with regard to education and research/scholarship/creative work
- List the programs within your unit that you believe are of the highest relevance to Hawai'i
- List the programs within your unit that are most cost-effective
- Discuss opportunities to realize cross-unit academic and/or administrative efficiencies within your unit or with others on campus

In September, 2020, an initial set of program-level recommendations were posted on the Planning website, and unit leaders were asked to begin internal discussions. Several revisions were made to the initial recommendations as the process unfolded. Discussions were held across campus,

including a total of 68 one-hour meetings with department faculty and staff; two campus-wide Town Halls; monthly meetings with the academic department Chairs; frequent (approx. bi-weekly) meetings with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee; monthly meetings with student and union leadership; monthly meetings with all consultative bodies (Faculty Senate, Staff senate, undergraduate students, graduate students, Kualī'i Council (advisory to the President on Native Hawaiian affairs, and the three unions); and a December, 2020 meeting with the full Faculty Senate. These discussions led to multiple revisions to the team's recommendations, and to a number of entirely new recommendations.

Recognizing the need to develop a framework, along with indicators and metrics, to guide the campus decision-making for future budget allocations and hiring, a committee was formed to develop Performance Indicators for Prioritization. The committee included 6 faculty, 5 Deans, 3 staff, 2 students, a representative from Kualī'i Council, and the Planning team. A guidance document was shared with the deans and directors in April, 2021, and the units were asked to provide a self-assessment in support of any hiring requests. In essence, the Performance Indicators will aid in the identification of, and investment in our priorities. The Indicators will also facilitate the regular assessment of our performance in achieving our goals. Final hiring decisions are being made at the time of this writing, guided by each units' submittals in response to the Performance Indicators guidance, as well as the Planning for Post-Pandemic Hawai'i recommendations and associated data and information.

Our preparation for the Fall, 2021 semester, guided by the Working Teams alluded to earlier, originally envisioned a roughly 50/50 split in the number of courses offered online versus at least partially in-person. This plan was bolstered by the creation of 75 "Here or There" classrooms using advanced technology that enables face-to-face instruction in the classroom while also allowing for the active, 2-way participation of online students. Unfortunately the Delta variant and associated dramatic increase in cases in Hawai'i since July has forced us to move many of the scheduled in-person classes to "hybrid" mode, thereby allowing these courses to begin the semester fully online while reserving the option (and the classroom) to return to at least partially in-person later in the semester. It should be noted that throughout the pandemic, the decision as to the modality of instruction (fully online; fully in-person; hybrid; "here-or-there") has been left to the faculty. We have not been prescriptive about the modality, and we have learned that students and faculty actually prefer to have choices.

In the meantime, we expect to have the largest first-time, first-year class in the history of the university. Our overall enrollment is up 8% over the Fall of 2020. This is of course very welcome news in the context of the reduction in our State budget allocation. We will be examining the makeup of the

entering class with the aim of better understanding the reasons for this dramatic development, so that we can build on this success and ensure that we do everything possible to retain the students who chose UH Mānoa.