Response to the WSCUC Team Report
David Lassner, President
January 28, 2022

On behalf of the entire UH Mānoa community, I thank the WSCUC Commission for the opportunity to pursue the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation and to respond to the team’s report. Through this process, we were able to delve more deeply into our challenges in a way that leveraged the reaffirmation process and helped us develop timelines to forward. As noted by the review team, our process was driven by a large, representative steering committee that engaged in a collaborative and inclusive way over the last 4 years, including addressing extraordinarily difficult and contentious topics that challenge our entire state and our university. As a result of the work of our campus community, and through the TPR, we have emerged a better institution with strong plans to continue to improve. And for that we are grateful.

I also thank you for assembling an outstanding review team. Although remote, we appreciated their deep and thoughtful engagement in the process and their insights, commendations and recommendations provided directly and in the team report. Overall, we are very pleased with the review and find the recommendations both substantive and fair. For your consideration, below we provide additional context, a few clarifications, and updates on our progress to assist the Commission in understanding the issues facing our institution at this time.

Clarifications and Additional Context

Strategic Resource Allocations: With respect to the first recommendation, we have begun work to realign our resources with our priorities. This work began in earnest with the development of the Performance Indicators for Prioritization by a working group of administrators, faculty, staff and students in April of 2021. The indicators reflect our mission, vision, and the goals in our strategic plan, Mānoa 2025, and identify metrics for units to measure their progress. The indicators support the ongoing identification of, and investment in our priorities while also facilitating the regular assessment of our performance in living our values and achieving our goals. The indicators were used for the first time in the budget and hiring decisions for fiscal year 2022 as we began to “thaw” the pandemic-related hiring freeze, and strategic hires are underway in a number of units. We will use the indicators again for the fiscal year 2023 allocations. While it will take a few years to see the collective results of these efforts, the indicators will be key to our full implementation of the first recommendation.

UH System Performance Goals and Metrics: The UH (System) Strategic Directions 2015-2021 includes time-bound performance goals, metrics, and improvement targets by year for each campus in the UH System, including UH Mānoa. For example, the Hawai‘i Graduation Initiative metrics, tracked annually by campus, include the Number of STEM degrees; 4-year Graduation rates; 6-year Graduation and success rates; Graduation and transfer rates; Enrollment to degree gap for Native Hawaiian students; Enrollment to degree gap for Pell recipient students; and First-year retention rates (full-time; first time). Though the plan’s term ended in 2021, many of the goals, such as the 4-year graduation rate target for UHM, continue through 2025. In 2016, the Hawai‘i State legislature appropriated $6.3M in performance funding for the achievement of these goals, and UH Mānoa is awarded an average of $1.4M/year for reaching or exceeding these benchmarks. Performance funds have supported the establishment of the Learning Assistant Program; the Excellence in Academic Advising review; classroom and library upgrades for the new Student Success Center; first-year programs; undergraduate research scholarships; support and initiatives targeting Native Hawaiian students; retention scholarships; and other campus-wide student success efforts.
The Provost’s Strategic Investment Initiative: In addition to the performance indicators, the Provost’s Strategic Investment Initiative is another tool through which we align our resources with our priorities. Utilizing a combination of surplus tuition and performance funding, the Strategic Investment Initiative is designed to increase cross-unit and cross-disciplinary collaboration in strategic areas that, with start-up funding, have a strong possibility for success in building on our strengths while addressing challenges. First launched in 2017, the Initiative has provided start-up funding for a diverse set of initiatives, many which have become ongoing programs that elevate the quality and impact of the university’s work. One example is the Center for Microbiome Analysis through Island Knowledge and Investigation (C-MĀIKI), which was funded with an initial investment of $700,000. Since that initial investment, C-MĀIKI has generated more than $11 million in extramural funding to support research and curriculum development. The provost will launch another round this spring, focusing on efforts that address the challenges and lessons learned through the pandemic.

Student Success Efforts and the Campus Reorganization: Phase II of the campus reorganization, which established the organizational structure under the provost, became effective in July of 2021. The Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success (OVPSS) was established by reorganizing programs focused on student academic success with programs focused on student growth and development. Our goal is to provide a more integrated, holistic approach to supporting our students. We were just four months into the new organizational structure at the time of the review, and while we are still in the process of implementing the reorganization and coordinating efforts across programs, we believe that the OVPSS is positioned to realize our goals for transformational student success: the holistic, intellectual, and affective development of our students to ensure that they acquire the skills needed to thrive in their communities and achieve their fullest potential.¹ The team’s recommendations will help to guide this work going forward. We also see great promise with the filling of the position of the Director for Academic Advising, a position that had no home in the former organization that is now entering recruitment.

Support for Underserved Student Populations: The Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion, housed within the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success, provides educational opportunities and support services for historically underrepresented and underserved populations. These programs are critical to our success in addressing equity and achievement gaps. In our report, we highlighted the successes of the Hawai‘i Undergraduate Initiative (HUI) and the Mānoa Access Initiative (MAI), which the team omitted from its report. We would like to note that the successes of the HUI and MAI bridge programs have contributed greatly to our efforts to improve retention, graduation rates, and time-to-degree for underserved populations, particularly for Pacific Islander and Filipino students.

Support for Native Hawaiian Students: The Office of Native Hawaiian Student Services (NHSS), housed in the School of Hawaiian Knowledge, was established in 2008 to address educational disparities that persist among the Native Hawaiian population. Native Hawaiian students comprise approximately 17.7% of enrollment, including nearly 2,000 undergraduate students and 750 graduate students. The 4-year and 6-year graduation rates for Native Hawaiian students have reached record highs over the last 10 years, and NHSS has contributed to that success.

We would like to clarify that NHSS, which is based in our Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, does not comprise the entirety of our efforts to support Native Hawaiian students. This critical work is integrated across a range of both campus-wide programs and initiatives at the school and college level, as we believe that many students may be best supported within their major. Examples of this work may be found in the Institutional Report, however of special note are the Native Hawaiian student success programs found in the colleges of Education, Engineering, Social Sciences, Medicine, Law, and Nursing.

¹ Our definition of Transformational Student Success from the UH Mānoa Institutional Report.
While there are many other programs and initiatives across campus that were not included in the examples provided, the institutional allocation for the programs highlighted totaled $10.4M (FY 2021). While we agree that the institutional allocation for NHSS, which totaled $469K in general funds for personnel in FY2021, should certainly be increased, the unit has received more than $30M in federal appropriations and research grants to support its work as well as a recent tripling of the institutionally allocated position count and provision of new “prime” space in the Queen Liliu‘okalani Center for Student Services. As we work to ensure more institutional support, our budget model will also continue to leverage our success in extending those efforts through grants, federal appropriations, and private funding.

New Developments and Plans to Address the Recommendations

Conflicts-of-Interest Policy for Dual Role of the President: We agree with the team's recommendation for a conflicts-of-interest policy to address the dual role of the President. On January 20, 2022 the Board of Regents noted this recommendation and requested a plan for followup and implementation. We anticipate that a formal policy will be developed by the end of the calendar year.

Tenure and Faculty Classification Discussions: Since the review, a Tenure Task Force website, inclusive of meeting minutes, has been established to ensure greater transparency on discussions. A draft report was posted online in December for faculty review and comment (due January 2). The draft recommendations include the following:

1. To make no changes in the way tenure is earned and granted or the way tenured faculty are reviewed.
2. To make no changes to the tenurability of extension agents.
3. To make no changes to the tenurability of librarians.
4. While not a change in policy, we identified a need for more robust training for university personnel charged with the responsibility for implementing tenure and promotion policies and periodic review policies including both faculty and administrators. Our recommendations for changes to the classification practices would better align UH with its benchmark institutions (those with which UH aspires to compare):
5. To phase out the researcher (R), law faculty (J) and medical faculty (M) classifications and moving forward, reclassify them as they become vacant along with current instructional (I) faculty positions, to a more general faculty classification (perhaps F) consistent with other institutions where faculty are also responsible for instruction, research and service.
6. To phase out the specialist (S) position classification and reclassify all S positions to some other classification, as they become vacant.

We find these recommendations to be consistent with the expectations for faculty and tenure as outlined in the WSCUC standards and criteria for review.

UH Strategic Directions, 2023-2030: As noted by the team, the UH Strategic Directions ended in 2021. Work is underway across the UH System on the the next UH Strategic Plan. The timeline and plan was presented to the Board of Regents on January 20, 2022 and includes a survey of faculty and staff to develop the goals over the spring semester, the development of a plan and metrics over the summer, and UH System-wide consultation at the beginning of the fall semester to enable adoption by the end of the calendar year.
Efforts to Close Equity and Achievement Gaps: Based on a demonstrated commitment to equity and student success, UH Mānoa was selected as one of eight institutions nationwide to participate in the Association of College and University Educator's Improving Teaching Practices and Student Outcomes Nationwide initiative to study and improve gateway courses (funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation). Through this program, faculty members will work with peers in facilitated, professional development modules to develop skills and evidence-based teaching practices to improve student achievement and to close equity gaps. Recruitment of faculty is underway, with training scheduled for March through December of 2022. We look forward to assessing the impact of this program as we anticipate that this effort will mirror the success that we experienced with our Learning Assistant Program.

Truth & Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Update: As noted in the Institutional Report, UH Mānoa is designated as a TRHT Campus Center, an effort spearheaded by the Native Hawaiian Place of Learning Advancement Office. This week, AAC&U announced that UH Mānoa is one of 19 institutions selected to participate in the development of a TRHT-Focused Campus Climate Assessment Toolkit. The toolkit, once developed, will help institutions investigate systems, policies, programs, services and practices that perpetuate disparities and inequities. This work will include assessing UH Mānoa's historical and implicit racial narratives, opportunities for relationship building, and racial healing among students, faculty, staff, and the community. We look forward to the impact of this initiative as we continue to work to support our diverse campus community and improve our relationship with the host culture.

Civic & Community Engagement Update: In our Institutional Report, we noted our challenges in obtaining detailed and consistent assessment data on curricular and co-curricular civic engagement activities, an important next step in assessing our institutional learning objectives. Towards this end, UH Mānoa was selected as one of eighteen institutions to participate in AAC&U’s Advancing Evidence on Civic and Community-Based Engagement in Higher Education, a new project designed to develop national baselines for student performance on civic outcomes. This spring, the UH Mānoa team will submit at least one hundred student work products to AAC&U’s Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Institute. The student work will be scored by certified VALUE scorers, and the resulting baseline data will be disaggregated to identify equity gaps in civic skill development. The project will culminate in the release of a summary report that will include recommendations for how our campus—and higher education as a whole—can best support civic skill-building for all students. We are also exploring the Carnegie Classification for Civic Engagement, and a team of faculty, staff and administrators are currently participating in workshops in anticipation of submitting an application in the 2024 cycle.

Update on Efforts to Increase Faculty Diversity: In October, UH Mānoa submitted a proposal for the National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE – Catalyst Track. Building on prior research, literature and NSF work on gender, racial, and ethnic equity, the NSF ADVANCE program's goal is to forward the use of evidence-based systemic change strategies to promote equity for STEM faculty. UH Mānoa proposed to explore issues that reflect the intersections of gender and ethnicity in Hawai'i, including the recruitment of Native Hawaiian and local faculty, and changes to the tenure and promotion processes to count community engagement towards research. If successful, this work holds great promise in our efforts to reflect the diversity of the state in our faculty.

Update on Support for Native Hawaiian Student Success Efforts: Our support for Native Hawaiian student success extends into the pipeline of students into higher education, and federal funding is important in that model. Towards that end, since the Institutional Report was submitted, UH Mānoa received another $6.9M in support of Native Hawaiian student success for the following programs and initiatives:
Kuhikuhina Kaulike ($439,772) will provide professional development to improve the abilities of educators in schools with high concentrations of Native Hawaiian students to meet cultural and learning needs.

Nā Hokua Project-COVID Relief Initiative ($919,011) will support at-risk youth to overcome learning losses and meet other pandemic-induced needs to achieve college success.

Project Hōkūlani Hui ($769,642) will create hui (groups) at local Native Hawaiian communities on the islands of Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi, Molokaʻi, Maui and Kauaʻi for Hōkūlani scholars (i.e., Native Hawaiian high school students having potential in STEM) and provide a differentiated Hōkūlani Program (i.e. a year-long culture, strength and work-based program consisting of STEM hands on learning; mentoring; college transition support; paid internship and internship project; and monthly ʻohana gatherings and tailored support at community centers).

Kākau mea nui 2.0 ($847,245) will address the achievement gaps faced by Native Hawaiian students through implementation of a teacher focused, job-embedded professional development program.

The Hawaiʻi Positive Engagement Project ($836,477) has a mission to innovatively address Native Hawaiian parent, educator and student needs that have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Hoʻokuʻi V: Kūlia i ka Nuʻu ($691,446) will support all Native Hawaiian students—including students with disabilities, at risk, gifted and talented, and to increase enrollment of Native Hawaiian students in postsecondary degree and certificate programs leading to employment.

ʻAha Lamakū ʻOiaʻiʻo Hoʻōikaika Aʻe or ALO-HA ($401,342) promotes Native Hawaiian student success by employing an evidence-based multi-tiered system of support framed around strategically organized services relative to goals aligned with primary practice categories predictive of high-school success.

Hilinehu: Educational Leadership Advancement initiative ($853,095) will increase the number and quality of Native Hawaiian graduate level kumu (teachers) and administrators retained within the Hawaiʻi Department of Education and the UH System.

Kapaʻakea: Engaging Hawaiian Research & Multi-Disciplinary Collaborations at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa ($543,646) proposes to increase Hawaiian student educational attainment by transforming institution-wide instructional practices, co-curricular core services and student engagement opportunities to be a Hawaiian place of learning.

Mai ʻŌ A ʻŌ: Meeting the Needs of Native Hawaiian Educators and Students through Remote Learning Professional Development ($549,950) will provide graduate assistants and grant staff the opportunity to attend workshops, webinars and other educational training sessions to expand the scope of Native Hawaiian Online Academy Series offerings.

These are just a few updates on our progress and efforts since the campus visit. Campus discussions on the recommendations are under way, and we plan to have an implementation strategy and timeline by the end of the semester.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to pursue the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation. We look forward to our discussion with the Commission on February 24.