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WEST O'AHU

**Response to the WSCUC Team Report
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation
Chancellor Maenette K.P. Benham
Monday, May 16, 2022**

In 2017, University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu (UHWO) adopted the 'ōlelo no'eau (wise saying) "*E pūpūkahi i holomua!*" "Unite to move forward!" That call to action inspired resiliency over the past two years and continues to motivate us today. The IRR process and subsequent team report provide key observations and recommendations that will guide our strategic and tactical direction as we advance our mission in a rapidly changing environment. The overarching takeaways from this process focus on these recommendations: (a) a strong assessment director to guide collaborative, data-informed, university-wide assessment practices; (b) effective use of data assessment tools to inform a strategically developed, comprehensive enrollment plan led by a director of enrollment management; (c) strengthen our academic plan that integrates and guides programs offered on-campus and via distance learning; and (d) coordinate campus operations as well as communication and instructional platforms to ensure student success.

On behalf of the faculty, staff, students and communities we serve, *mahalo nūmui* to the WSCUC Accreditation Visit Team (Team) whose expertise, time, and care was deeply felt and appreciated. Mahalo for acknowledging the collective and inclusive process that led our campus team from data collection to campus-wide discussions to the framing and writing of the campus report. In response to each of the WSCUC team's recommendations, we provide additional information, but more importantly, our next steps to address the concerns.

Recommendation Responses and Next Steps

Strategic Action Planning & Campus Leadership:

Prior to March 2020, UHWO campus leadership presented a work group design to kick-off Phase II of the 2018-2028 Strategic Action Plan. Phase II was to begin fall 2020 to "create a campus that embodies Sustainability/Aloha 'Āina, Innovation and Transformation, and 'Ōiwi Leadership." Work groups had begun to form as the pandemic reached Hawai'i's shores. In June 2020, in light of the pandemic, the chancellor pivoted the efforts of these work groups to address the impacts of COVID-19 on our instructional and operational needs and we called it the Pueo Planning Process. The four strategic action planning workgroups now focused on: (1) student learning success utilizing diverse delivery platforms and innovation; (2) student services that strengthened tutoring, counseling, varied communication platforms and new ways of recruiting students to post-secondary education; (3) campus efficiencies focused on the health and safety of our workforce and maintenance of our facilities; and (4) a refined business model to ensure our financial stability.

Many positive lessons from the last two years have been institutionalized into practice: the establishment of the University Budget Advisory Council (UBAC); a strengthened Office for Distance Learning; and an expanded Office for Professional Development (for both faculty and staff). As we look to academic year

2022-2023, we will be transitioning our Pucio Planning Process back to the work outlined in Phase II of our Strategic Action Plan.

The campus acknowledges the loss of key staff over the last two years and has committed to prioritize the request to hire for the following positions:

- **Vice Chancellor for Administration.** Searching during the pandemic was problematic resulting in no hire. We plan to restart the search process this summer.
- **Director of Strategic Directions, Assessment, and Accreditation.** This position will be housed in the chancellor's office, thereby elevating the importance of this effort as an all-campus responsibility. We are currently requesting an executive level position and hope to start the search process this summer.
- **Director of Enrollment Management.** We are currently requesting a position to search for a skilled, energetic enrollment manager that will strengthen and implement our strategic enrollment plan as well as grow our recruitment team.
- **Permanent Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.** Conversations and planning have begun; search would occur this coming academic year 2022-2023.

Currently the work of these hires is being done by executives, directors, faculty and staff on top of an already complicated and heavy load. Placement of these key positions will address the Team's concerns and the majority of their recommendations.

Recommendation #1 – Assessment:

We concur with the Team's imperative for the need of a strong assessment leader. As noted in the above section we are committed to the hire of a Director of Strategic Directions, Assessment, and Accreditation as a matter of acute priority. This position will be housed in the chancellor's office, serving the entire campus enterprise, which would include (but not be limited to) academic program reviews, cocurricular program reviews, work with OPDAS for implementation of faculty and staff PD, and work with IRO to develop sound use of data.

Although the financial impact of the pandemic presented challenges for the timely refilling of the assessment director position, the appointment of a Campus Assessment Coordinator on 0.25 FTE was always intended as a stopgap measure until the institution was able to reestablish a permanent position. Currently, UHWO's Assessment Committee has continued to move forward with activities that meet the objectives outlined for the "planning and reflection" year (Year 0) of the new Assessment Procedures. This spring and summer (2022), standardized forms for assessment projects (e.g., artifact collection, assessment reporting, closing-the-loop activities) are being finalized and the committee is organizing assessment training for the UHWO community. An assessment training series with certification of completion that intends to provide specific and focused information for faculty on the assessment process and key components of best practices in assessment is being offered in fall 2022. Our Campus Assessment Coordinator in collaboration with the UH System Assessment group, currently led by the UH Mānoa Assessment office, worked to provide standardized job responsibilities that are being incorporated into the new Director of Strategic Assessment, Programs and Accreditation job description. These activities are designed to facilitate a new understanding of assessment on the UHWO campus and bolster a faculty-driven and administration-supported assessment process.

Recommendation #2—Data Analysis and Application:

We agree that there is opportunity for UHWO to strengthen our use of data. To that point, our new Director of Strategic Directions, Assessment, and Accreditation will work with campus and UH System partners to build this important campus capacity. In response to the team's concern, the Office of the Vice

Chancellor of Student Affairs is developing operational procedures that link performance assessment of services to use, satisfaction, and student success, i.e., course completion and academic achievement. In addition, data use and data review training has been scheduled with the campus Institutional Research Office to properly equip student affairs personnel in meaning-making exercises to improve service design, practices, and policy implementation impacts on the student experience.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chancellor's office, through the Institute for Research and Engaged Scholarship had been developing a Pueo Data Fellows Program inspired by the CSU Long Beach College of Health & Human Services Data Fellows Team and the WSCUC Fellowship Program. In light of the Team's recommendation, we will pilot the Pueo Data Fellows Program this coming academic year (2022-2023) with four fellows who will select a substantive project issue to explore and provide recommendations that could, for example, generate program and practice changes, and even inform policy.

Recommendation #3—Academic Plan Reflecting Online Modalities (Post-COVID-19):

UH West O'ahu's Strategic Action Plan 2018-2028 and Distance Learning Tactical Plan 2019-2025 provided the grounding that prepared our campus to successfully address the unanticipated institutional challenges posed by COVID-19. Presently, as we emerge from the critical pandemic phase, we are revisiting our plans to engage in the continued development of our academic planning.

Regarding the development of our academic plan, consider our most recent long-range academic plan, the Six-Year Academic Master Plan released in 2020. This was part of the UH System's Integrated Academic and Facilities Planning effort that aimed to develop six-year rolling plans for facilities, enrollment, operating budgets, and academic programs. Our most recent example of the fulfillment of this planning occurred on May 5, 2022, when the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the UH Board of Regents voted to recommend Board of Regents' approval to establish a new provisional certificate in Labor Studies at UHWO. The UH System will return to updating the Academic Master Plan, which was not meant to be static. Revising the plan will coincide with UHWO's semi-annual reviews and campus-wide presentations of our strategic actions and the most current tactical strategies from our Strategic Action Plan.

In regard to Distance Education, we have been on track in fulfilling the "Plan for Growth" described in our Distance Learning Tactical Plan 2019-2025 by successfully meeting our identified immediate priorities. Still, we acknowledge that our deliberate intention to "grow responsibly and with the highest regard to quality" has met with a convergence of factors accelerated by the pandemic and brought about by the recent downturn in enrollment. The sudden perceived decline in projected and actual resources (i.e., positions, general funds, and tuition revenue), coupled with growing student and faculty preferences for asynchronous online instruction, has precipitated an increase in discussions about the role of distance education in the development of our current and future academic offerings. We will utilize data and feasibility analyses, generated by our Institutional Research Office, to prepare a comprehensive strategy regarding the development of distance programs. This pursuit will commence with the academic chairs and staff, during the summer, via participation in our Academic Leadership Council, and will proceed to campus-wide consultation at the beginning of the fall semester to enable adoption by the end of the calendar year of a comprehensive strategy that further clarifies the role of distance education for UHWO.

Recommendation #4—Enrollment Management:

We appreciate recognition that a team of two highly committed and motivated individuals has driven the recruitment and outreach efforts for the campus during the last two years and we concur that there is a need for more focused support. As noted above we are prioritizing the search for a Director of Enrollment Management. In the interim, enrollment services and admissions with other members of Student Affairs are focused on increased yield programming to encourage enrollment from accepted pools of new

freshmen and new transfer individuals. The team has also begun to craft a preliminary strategic enrollment plan for campus-wide consideration in alignment with a campus academic plan. This strategic plan will include targets for expanding markets, (e.g., working adults, especially career-changers and re-toolers, UH Community College transfers, and military-connected, veterans, and ROTC students). Finally, to address the end of our EAB contract the campus will reexamine its operating cash balance to prioritize the need for a comprehensive marketing mix of digital media, advertising, social media, and print collateral.

Recommendation #5--Budget/Finance, Land/Facilities Planning, & Human Resources:

- A. Due to positive financial projections for our state's economy, the supplemental budget, pending the Governor's approval, will permanently restore \$1.08 million of UHWO's general funds eliminated in 2021. Weighed against a possible \$1.62 million cut in fiscal year 2024 (mentioned on page 23 of the Team Report) our interpretation is that this indicates the additional \$1.62 million in general funds that may have been eliminated in fiscal year 2024 will likely remain in the budget permanently. As a result, we anticipate a balanced budget for fiscal year 2023 and a more positive budgetary outlook beyond.
- B. Regarding the team's recommendations for our three-member planning and design staff, they have purview over 1,400 acres of primarily undeveloped land and are working with our UH System land offices on the following efforts:
 - On our ma uka (upland) land, the AES solar project is underway. This provides UHWO with a lease income.
 - In the University District Lands area, the \$10 million request to the State Legislature to support planning and infrastructure was removed during the conference hearing. We will need to request these funds again in 2023.
 - In the area of student housing, in 2019 UH System and UHWO presented our campus development plan at the P3 for Higher Ed Summit in San Diego, and interviewed 13 potential contractors to build our residence halls. This process was halted due to COVID-19. We plan to attend the P3 for Higher Ed Summit in October 2022, in San Diego.
 - The report mentioned space utilization. MKThink prepared a high level space utilization analysis for UHWO in 2017. As they are still doing work with the UH System we will inquire if they would be willing to update the analysis to include a 3-to-5 year forward analysis.
- C. Positions. UHWO did not recover positions that were removed by the State Legislature.

Recommendation #6—Fund Development:

From fiscal years 2018 to 2020, UHWO's Fund Developer increased giving from \$658,248 to \$929,119. The loss of our fund developer in April, 2020, combined with the impact of COVID-19 resulted in a dip in giving in 2021; however, in 2022, with several large gifts, we are currently at \$1,256,987. The UH Foundation recently hired Ms. Darian Padilla as UHWO's Director of Fund Development. She began May 1, 2022, and is located in the chancellor's office at UHWO. Ms. Padilla will be developing a strategic fund development plan for fiscal year 2022-2023

Recommendation #7—Strategic Student Communications & Coordination of Effort:

A concern of the team focused on (a) the coordination and communication between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and (b) better continuity and on-going support for instructional faculty and student support staff to use online platforms. In response to the first concern, UHWO currently uses several UH System-supported communications channels (one is UH Broadcast, an email system used for campuswide announcements that can target faculty, staff, and students as individual groups or collectively.) To complement this, our campus communication unit manages three major social media platforms—

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and sends out a weekly newsletter (Makahaiwa‘a) via email to all faculty, staff, and students. Current coordinated information from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to students includes messaging about academic advising, conduct and counseling, testing and placement, and student development coursework. An important coordinated effort is our campus early alert process, which involves classroom faculty nudging student services to follow-up with students of concern who are not working to their optimum potential. We will continue to refine this early alert process and reconsider follow-up touchpoints with students.

The recommendation also suggests a more streamlined official communication channel for students across all modalities. Another area we will be working on is our online instructional platform, Laulima (a UH System platform used by all campuses). Working with faculty and students, we hope to provide more professional development opportunities for instructors. We will also work with our campus and UH System IT offices to refine the portal to ensure consistency of information across courses so that students have the resources they need to be successful.

To address both concerns, the Academic and Student Affairs units have collaborated and developed a new Specialist Faculty position, Coordinator of Online Learning and Community Engagement. It would be housed in the No‘eau Center/Student Learning (Student Affairs) and would partner with the Director of the Office of Distance Learning (Academic Affairs). At this time, we are awaiting approval to hire from the UH System.

Recommendation #8—Enhancing Internal Coordination and Effectiveness:

The team expressed a concern about internal coordination, operations, and effectiveness in the areas of assessment and program review. The team noted that although the institution has appropriate learning outcomes and a strong program review handbook, there is tremendous variation from one degree program to the next in terms of: (1) faculty engagement with assessment; (2) the timely completion of the full cycle of program review; and (3) more direct assessment of functions/interventions that are used to drive curricular changes that support student success. We believe that the hiring of the Director of Strategic Directions, Assessment, and Accreditation will help to address these concerns.

Recommendation #9—Professional Development for Campus Success:

UH West O‘ahu expanded the scope of its professional development activities in 2018, with the establishment of the Office of Professional Development and Academic Support (OPDAS). The impetus for this change was to ensure that professional development initiatives met the needs of the campus staff as well as the faculty. At this time, the institution also designated an OPDAS Coordinator and formed a seven-member OPDAS Advisory Board consisting of faculty and staff members from all four campus units. OPDAS communicates its programs through a weekly newsletter and it partners with a variety of campus units (e.g., Human Resources, Distance Learning, Compliance, Institute for Research and Engaged Scholarship) to implement a wide range of professional development activities. During the pandemic, funds were used to acquire subscriptions to organizations such as Magna Publications Online Seminar Series and the Online Learning Consortium to provide employees access to a myriad of online professional development programs.

OPDAS also oversees a faculty mentoring program, which was commended by the Interim Report Panel in 2019. In the years since, the mentoring program has sponsored presentations by national experts in the areas of “Making Progress in a Pandemic” (Dr. Anna Ortiz), Trauma-Informed Healing and Recovery (Dr. Mays Imad), and Success after Tenure (Dr. Vicki Baker). OPDAS organizes a week-long Professional Development Institute at the end of each semester, with faculty and staff members encouraged to submit proposals to deliver presentations and workshops in their areas of expertise. Over the past two academic years, OPDAS has provided 87 events with 802 total participants. The total participants represent 182 individuals participating in at least one professional development event.

Mahalo nui for this opportunity to provide clarifying information and updates on our progress to address these recommendations. We look forward to our meeting with you on June 23, 2022.