Progress Visit Team Report

for the

University of Hawai‘i
Community College System

A Report Prepared for
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the progress visit team that visited the
University of Hawai‘i Community College System

November 14 – 16, 2005

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Introduction

This report recounts the findings of a Progress Report Visit Team that visited the seven University of Hawaii Community Colleges (UHCC) and the UH System Offices on November 14 to 16, 2005. This visit to all colleges and the system was required by the action of the Accrediting Commission at its June 2005 meeting. The Commission action continued a series of reports and visits required of the University of Hawai‘i and its colleges since it submitted a Substantive Change Request for system reorganization three years ago.

Over the course of these visits, accreditation teams identified “institutional effectiveness” as an area in which colleges were out of compliance with accreditation standards and also identified UHCC and UH system organization and practice as contributing factors to the colleges difficulty fulfilling standards that require ongoing research and evaluation, and planning and improvements to educational effectiveness of each college. In some cases, colleges were still having difficulty conceptualizing and implementing an effective campus process for program review and improvement; in other cases campuses had designed a process but the results of evaluation and planning had no practical avenue to reach the UH CC system’s priority setting process. In addition, the methods used to fund the UH CC’s left little opportunity for colleges to request resources to make improvements to existing programs. In January 2005, the Accrediting Commission placed several of the UH Community Colleges on warning due to these deficiencies. Details of the series of reports due and site visits conducted can be found in institutional and visiting team reports from fall 2003, spring 2004, fall 2004, and spring 2005.

In June 2005, the Commission required each UH community college to submit a Progress Report on college-specific issues, and the colleges were asked to collectively develop a report on system progress as it related to three recommendations. These recommendations concerned: (1) program review, assessment, planning, and supporting institutional improvements; (2) clarification of the community college functions and authority, and design of work-flow and decision-making structures that support the UHCC system operations; and (3) governance changes necessary to ensure that the UH CC system and the UH system, as well as the Board of Regents, develop and implement policies and processes to ensure the integrity and quality of the community colleges.

In preparation for this visit, three teams of two persons each read the report submitted by the University of Hawaii (representing UH and the UHCC system offices) and previous team and UH reports to the Commission. The UH System Report was factual, well written, and backed by appropriate supporting documentation. In addition, all team members read the current progress reports submitted by the two colleges to which they were assigned as well as previous college and team reports. The team met briefly on November 13 to prepare for
visits to the campuses, and met on the evening of November 15 to prepare for the visit to the system office.

College visits were conducted on November 14 and 15. Five of the six team members visited the UH system offices on November 16, 2005. At the UH System offices, the team met with the President of the University of Hawaii, the Vice President for Academic Policy and Planning, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Associate Vice President for Administrative Affairs and Community College Operations, representatives of the Board of Regents-Committee on Community Colleges, and representatives from groups responsible for developing the UHCC program review processes. The UH CC’s and the UH System have done a good deal of fine work to address the Commission’s recommendations, as is noted below. The team believes that all three recommendations have been well-addressed, and one is completely resolved.

The University of Hawaii has always received the Commission’s teams with a spirit of openness and candor, and a willingness to make changes in order to address the accreditors’ concerns and recommendations. During this visit, the University Regents, administrative staff and President again continued their pattern of candid discussion with the accreditation team. The team wishes to thank the Regents and the administrative leadership of the University of Hawaii for their professionalism, their cordial reception of the visiting team, and for the seriousness with which they have responded to Commission concerns.

Response to Recommendations

The previous visiting teams found the colleges varied in their ability to meet standards of institutional effectiveness (Standard IB) at the college level. In addition, teams found that the UHCC system did not have an adequate planning and resource distribution process to support ongoing college self-assessment and improvement. The fall 2004 team made the following recommendation regarding a comprehensive process for ongoing assessment, planning and improvement:

1. The Team recommends that the UH Community Colleges develop policies and procedures to ensure:
   - that the community colleges engage in regular assessment of institutional effectiveness, including program review;
   - that the community college system as well as each college set priorities for implementing plans for improvement that are based in analysis of research data;
   - that the colleges and the UHCC system incorporate these priorities into resource distribution processes and decisions;
   - that the colleges and the UHCC system develop and employ a methodology for assessing overall institutional effectiveness and progress toward meeting goals expressed through plans for improvements; and
   - that the colleges and the UHCC system report regularly to internal constituencies and the Board on this progress. (Standards I.B., II A. 1. and 2.,
Findings:

The UHCC system has made significant progress in responding to this recommendation. In spring 2005, the seven community college Chancellors agreed upon principles that would guide a system-wide program review process. In August 2005, the colleges came to agreement on a consistent format and common measures for academic program reviews. In September, the Chancellors agreed on core measures for administrative and student support program reviews. This policy was promulgated throughout the UH CCs in mid September, 2005.

As part of its Progress Report, the UH CCs provided a copy of UH CC Policy #5.202 (Dated October 2005) which provides a complete description of the policy regarding program review and the required analytic components and data elements of all program reviews. This document demonstrates that the UH CCs have developed a program review and planning process that will, when fully implemented, complete the cycle of evaluation, planning, improvement, and evaluation that is required in Standard IB as well as other parts of the ACCJC standards.

The Program Review format requires a statement of program mission, information on external factors affecting the program, historical trend data on key measures, program health indicators with benchmarks to provide an analysis of program health, required external measures (such as student surveys, job placement, employer surveys, etc.) analysis of outcomes over the period of the review (at minimum reviews must occur every five years), and recommendations that are to be incorporated into the units plan or the college’s next strategic plan. The Policy also calls for periodic and regular assessment of the program review process, and modification as needed. All programs are required to review some of their program data annually and to contribute to an annual report to the Board of Regents on program quality.

The UH CC’s also provided the format for Program Review to the Team, entitled Instructional Program Review Procedures and Measures. It indicates the colleges will be using qualitative and quantitative data to examine program quality. The student outcome measures include attainment of student educational goals, persistence rate, graduation and transfer rates, success at another UH campus, licensure information, Perkins (vocational education) core indicators, and create a 3-grade system for categorizing the overall health of a program. The reviews also will examine data that assesses student learning against program student learning outcomes (when these are all designed). The review format requires programmatic staff to make recommendations for curricular revision and other changes, and to examine how the program aligns with institutional and program mission. It also requires an evaluation of the results of any implemented changes. The format thus “closes the loop” of evaluation, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Lest the system-wide standards for program review stifle more detailed or creative inquiry about program quality and student performance at the campus levels, the new Policy permits
colleges to add data elements to the program review process as they wish, and to design additional approaches to program examination. The colleges will be permitted to expand on the core measures for planning and resource allocation at the college level, and to pursue deeper inquiry about program quality and student achievement. This team found several extant examples of college evaluative research that goes well beyond the program review process.

The University is working to create a web-based access to program review data and planning information that will allow all interested to see the results of program review. This project will fulfill the Program Review’s policy principle that requires the annual results of program review to be made available to the colleges and the public.

The Program Review design is very ambitious and thorough. When the colleges are able to implement it, they will have a wealth of information with which to examine quality and plan improvements. Some of these measures, such as certain efficiency ratios, will be of less interest to faculty (although perhaps more interest to administrators). But the basic needs of all interested parties should be satisfied by the new design for program review.

It appears that collection of all of the data elements is not anticipated for a few years. The University of Hawaii’s new student information system (SCT Banner) is in early stages of implementation. The University’s Legacy data system, while it produced many longitudinal data reports that were and are useful to the colleges, requires programmer time. UH CC staff indicated that the University of Hawaii has not allocated sufficient technical support for the colleges to continue to receive some of the legacy reports they find useful for program review. UH CC staff indicated that the current student information system is rudimentary, and more modules and training are needed to enable college staff to develop the kinds of queries they will find useful beyond the routine data collection and analyses called for in the system-wide program review process. Nevertheless, the Chancellors have made the commitment to begin program reviews with the data that is currently available. Those colleges with staff that have research skills are able to make adjustments to the data and develop additional analyses and to track the results of specific experiments or interventions; those colleges without the in-house technical capacity to conduct additional studies are relying at present on the new program review process for the major source of evaluative research.

All program reviews use a set of core measures for academic program review which will provide for some consistency in analysis across colleges and in reports forwarded to the System and the Board. This should make it more possible for the Community College Sub Committee of the Board of Regents to examine summative data on program quality and to better know the community colleges. The Policy calls for annual reports to the Community College Sub Committee of the Board at its third meeting each year, and for the results of program review to be incorporated in to UH CC system-wide planning and budget request.

The UH CCs have also made a supplemental budget request which would strengthen the staff used to support program review and assessment. The budget request includes a system administered fund that would be the first funding appropriation that purposely targets improvement of ongoing program quality.
Lastly, the University of Hawai‘i system has initiated a strategic planning process called “The Second Decade” which will identify challenges and opportunities for the entire state higher education system in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Currently the Vice President for Policy and Planning is conducting research on demographic, labor market and educational trends that are likely to impact the University’s three universities and seven community colleges. Included in this analysis will be consideration of the mission of the community colleges and the universities, and whether the University of Hawai‘i should expand its baccalaureate programs at one or more community college or use the universities to provide baccalaureate education. The research will also attempt to determine workforce training needs of the state, and the community colleges’ roles in addressing those needs. Finally, the project will set the stage for discussion of revenue models that could help the University and its institutions address the state’s public higher education needs. This project will help the University resolve some of the issues that remain around the multiple missions of its institutions. The community colleges’ ongoing program reviews should contribute to the University’s strategic planning efforts in this Second Decade project.

**Conclusion:** The University of Hawaii Community Colleges have fully addressed this recommendation in the design of a comprehensive program review and planning cycle. They have begun implementation of the new model of system-level decision making through their Supplemental Budget Request to the Hawaii State Legislature, which asks for program improvement funds that would address needs identified through program review. What remains is college-level implementation of program review through a five-year cycle, implementation of the planned annual third-meeting of the Board of Regents Subcommittee to examine the results of program review, and full implementation of all the data elements and analyses, and web publication, necessary for program review. At the college levels, programmatic faculty and staff must carry out program reviews under the new procedures. The Colleges and the UH CC System should be able to demonstrate further progress during the comprehensive evaluations scheduled for fall 2006.

6. The UH Community Colleges and the University of Hawaii System identify more clearly the community college system functions and authority assigned to the two Associate Vice President offices and staff, and communicate those to the colleges and the University System-wide Support. Both organizations must then design workflow and decision-making processes that allow the Community College System-wide Support staff to provide support and delegated authority in areas of academic planning, administrative (including personnel) and fiscal operations. (Standard IV A.5, Standard III A.3, Standard I B.)

**Findings:**

In spring 2005, the ACCJC visiting team determined that the UH CCs were considering several alternative models for organizing the UH CC and the UH systems in a way that would satisfy the University’s overall need for coherence of structure, a more reasonable number of direct reports to the University of Hawaii President’s Office, and the ACCJC’s requirements that the UH CC system’s administrative functions and authority be clear and in congruence
with accreditation standards and the Commission’s policy on multi-college systems. In June 2005, the Board of Regents approved another “reorganization” of the UH CC system which created a Vice President for Community Colleges, reporting to the President of the University. The new organization is a “blend” of the UH system-wide executive governance structures that prevailed the last three years, and the community college system structure that existed for the nineteen years previous to 2003.

The new Vice President position has direct authority for community college system governance as well as for advocacy for the community colleges with the University and the Legislature. Dr. John Morton, a respected and senior Chancellor within the Community Colleges, was appointed to this position on an interim basis. The college Chancellor’s still report to and interact with the President on university-wide matters, and participate in the Council of Chancellors and the President’s cabinet, albeit on a slightly different, representative basis. The two associate vice president positions (and their staffs) which were for the last three years responsible for community college and university-wide matters, now report to the Vice President for Community Colleges and serve the colleges exclusively. The Vice President position’s authority has allowed some increased coordination and coherence to the community college system.

In interviews with the college staffs, the team found all were very satisfied with the clear authority and lines of communication created through this new structure.

**Conclusion:** The University of Hawaii and the Community Colleges have fully addressed this recommendation.

7. **The UH Community Colleges identify and implement the means to ensure that that the Community College governance system at the system head and board levels meet accreditation standards, particularly policies and processes that ensure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services.** (Standard IV B, all).

**Findings:**

The Board of Regents for the University of Hawaii meets as a whole to conduct business matters ten times a year. One of the challenges for the Board has been providing enough time to community college issues to enable it to meet the required level of engagement with the colleges that the Commission’s 2002 Standards require. In September 2005, the Board of Regents enlarged its Community College Committee to include six members, representing the four neighbor islands and Oahu. The Committee and the UH CCs have determined that the Committee will meet four times a year to discuss broad community college issues in this order: (1) The Community College mission and the degree to which the colleges are meeting the mission. (2) The financial health of the colleges, including all sources of revenues and financial aid. (3) The results of program review and assessment, with a focus on the top performing programs and those needing significant change or closure. (4) Community College planning issues for the coming year, along with major initiatives and budget-related
proposals. The Board will continue to conduct regular community college business (e.g., approval of personnel actions) during its meetings of the whole.

The Board had its first Community College Committee meeting in the fall. Subsequent meetings await the return of the Vice President, who is on medical leave. In a meeting with the visiting team, Board members expressed their belief that the new Committee meeting schedule will enable it to be better informed about the specific mission and performance of the Community Colleges and to fulfill their role as a community college governing board.

**Conclusion:** The University of Hawaii and the UH Community Colleges have addressed this recommendation well through the decision to enlarge the Community College Subcommittee of the Board of Regents and to schedule four meetings per year to specifically discuss community college policy and performance matters. What remains is implementation. The colleges and the UH CC System should be able to demonstrate full implementation of this Committee at the time of the comprehensive visit in fall 2006.

**Summary**

In the last fifteen months, the University of Hawai`i has undertaken several significant initiatives to bring to resolution Accrediting Commission’s concerns about the UH CC System. Much credit for this progress must go to Interim President David McClain, who has led the colleges through several important discussions and decisions about structure and process. Additional credit goes to the Board of Regents for its willingness to accept additional and significant changes in organization to help the colleges meet standards, to the cooperative leadership of the community college Chancellors and their staffs, and to the two Associate Vice Presidents for the UH CC System who have worked to preserve system quality and coherence through several organizational changes the last three years.

The UHCC System has begun to develop a practice and culture of assessment and continuous improvement. The University will be recruiting a permanent President in the coming months. The team hopes that the commitment made to good practice by the University’s leadership under President McClain will continue and become institutionalized even if the University’s leadership changes.