

Report of the Student Affairs and Academic Services Task Force

THE GUIDING VISION

This Task Force is a very diverse group from all around the University. We include graduate students, undergraduates, deans, people who work in student affairs, and faculty members. The Task Force began its work by building on this foundation of diversity. Before we did anything else, we decided on what kind of place the University of Hawai'i should be for its undergraduates. We reviewed the documents and asked the questions with this vision in mind. For each of our considerations and all of our recommendations, the Task Force carefully asked this question: how does it enhance the opportunity for this fuller, richer, more rewarding undergraduate life?

Undergraduate education should be a challenging, exciting, and rewarding. It should include education in the classroom as well as learning in a broader sense. This experience requires a diverse and talented student body, a dynamic community of scholars, and an environment that makes these good social and intellectual experiences happen. The academic part of this experience must be coherent, with solid specialties and quality core education attached to each major. Students also need comprehensive and easily accessible services to enhance their chances of succeeding academically and socially. Finally, they need a campus where they want to spend time, a place that has life outside the classroom, a campus filled with the ferment of people from all parts of the campus community doing interesting and important things in a variety of settings.

Undergraduates talk about these needs in very straightforward ways. They want the courses they need when they need them. They want to graduate on time and begin

careers or post graduate work. They want easy access to information about their academic status, less hassles transferring courses, and high quality, affordable student housing that's made available at opportune times. They want to feel proud about their campus, to be a part of something that is challenging, interesting, and fun.

What follows are our recommendations for making this undergraduate experience happen. We first list the University's assets, particularly the things that positively affect the implementation of this vision. Then we list obstacles to improving undergraduate education. Finally, we make categories of recommendations. One category involves the organization of undergraduate education administration. The second is concerned with the new position of Director of Enrollment Services. The third and more diverse category is recommendations that are also crucial for making the campus a far more exciting and enriching place.

In the material we reviewed from documents and interviews, the Task Force discovered something very significant about the assessments of this University. There is an enormous amount of consensus regarding what is good and bad about this place. That consensus itself is an important asset. It brought clarity to our analysis and confidence that our recommendations are consistent with the goals and assessments, if not always the precise recommendations, of the many earlier, useful analyses.

These past reports as well as our own investigations convince us that authority for undergraduate education and services has to be more firmly in the chancellor's hands but in ways that foster initiative and cooperation rather than command and control. We address that specifically in our first set of recommendations, but this view is implicit in our recommendations as a whole.

ASSETS AND OBSTACLES

Assets:

These are the most important assets the University has for reaching the guiding vision:

- An increasingly diverse student body that appreciates its diversity.
- A wide variety of undergraduate majors.
- Recent development of and improvements in programs directly bearing on this vision (New Student Orientation, athletic advising, the first year experience, and enrollment management).
- A strong consensus that undergraduate education needs fixing.
- A consensus on the nature and sources of the problems.
- A chancellor, president, other high level administrators, and faculty publicly committed to improving undergraduate education
- A strong, shared sense that it's necessary to make these changes now.

Obstacles:

In addition to the general resource deficits, there are two kinds of obstacles. As our recommendations will show, these two categories are interrelated, but it helps first to see them separately because they come from different perspectives.

The first are **student complaints**. This is how the obstacles look to a student:

- Difficulty seeing advisers or getting quick information about academic status.
- Housing policy limiting the chances for out of state or transfer students to get housing and to find out in time whether they have housing or not.
- Transfer students have trouble getting their credits transferred. Even UH community college transfers have this problem. They have a hard time getting reliable information about the articulation of community college and Manoa courses.
- Trouble getting the courses they need.

--Not feeling a part of the place.

The second are **organizational obstacles to alleviating these complaints:**

--Primitive data processing technology that limits student services affecting all aspects of student life. Degree audits and financial aid are just two of many examples.

--Entrenched fear, wariness and cynicism about change.

--Difficulties getting cooperation or teamwork across organizational or unit lines.

--A lack of good working relationship between Manoa and community colleges.

Taken together, these assets and obstacles suggest both potential and pitfalls. People at UH want change yet are not sure how to make it happen. The new University leadership encourages change and initiative, yet others at the University operate in organizational cultures where leadership and initiative have been too often discouraged. Any major recommendations must take this combination of excitement, fear and anxiety very seriously. There is no way to implement any of our recommendations without developing a sustained and serious strategy for managing change. In that light here are our recommendations.

THE THREE CATEGORIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Organization of Undergraduate Education

We recommend the creation of a Chancellor's Chief of Staff for Undergraduate Education. This person oversees and coordinates all matters relating to the undergraduate curriculum and advises the chancellor on all matters of undergraduate and graduate student life. This chief of staff reports directly to the chancellor and in effect works out of the chancellor's office. This chief of staff is a UH faculty member appointed by the chancellor.

This position is a hybrid. This chief is the chancellor's eyes and ears on undergraduate matters and speaks for the chancellor on these issues. The person who holds this chief's position coordinates the many valuable but disparate activities occurring across campus, particularly those involving a variety of units. In other ways, the position resembles the gatekeeper and confidant role of a Presidential Chief of Staff. The chief of staff is also a troubleshooter. Overall, the chief of staff is, as one of the Task Force members put it, "a coordinator/facilitator with a bite."

This person does not replace anyone in the existing organization of administration and faculty. Instead he or she assumes responsibility for coordinating and implementing policies that require cooperation across units. This person further acts as a change agent by gathering appropriate data, consulting with stakeholders, and generally advocating for improvements in undergraduate education. The chief makes recommendations regarding budgets and other resources necessary to make projects and policies work. He or she is a team builder who builds communities of interest.

This chief of staff regularly consults with an advisory council composed of people from all across the University--students, faculty, deans, other administrators, students, student services personnel, to name a few. The composition of our own Task Force is an excellent example of what the composition of this advisory council should look like. Whatever its particular makeup, it is essential to have a group that can talk about the services side, the academic side, and the links between the two. The Director of Enrollment Services (see below) certainly belongs on this council. This group is geared to addressing challenges and issues that cut across organizational boundaries. It is an active working group that meets regularly with the chief of staff to give that person information and advice.

To appreciate the reasons for this chief of staff recommendation, it's necessary to see how much the Task Force agrees with the previous reorganization proposals and where we differ from them. The Task Force shares the objectives of these earlier reports. Whether these proposals advocate a dean, a vice chancellor, or a series of vice chancellors for undergraduate education, the plans all share two objectives. One is to make a stronger and more visible commitment to undergraduate education. The other is to clarify responsibility, to support units serving undergraduates, and to improve coordination of matters relating to undergraduate education.

These objectives are consistent with our Task Force's vision and our list of assets and obstacles. Visibility and responsibility must be at the heart of any undergraduate reorganization proposal. Any plan must show that it makes undergraduate education a higher priority throughout the University. The plan must clearly recognize the large number of organizations that serve undergraduate education. It must recognize the needs for better coordinating undergraduate education. Finally, a good plan must make clear in no uncertain terms that change is essential, feasible, and that people will be encouraged to bring it about.

We diverge from these earlier proposals in how we think these objectives can be met. We are certain that by now the Chancellor is familiar with these earlier proposals and has received much information about their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, our focus here is on how the Task Force proposal builds on the University's strengths and confronts its obstacles. We also discuss what has to be done to make our recommendation work.

The Task Force's Chief of Staff model avoids adding another layer of bureaucracy, but having fewer administrators is not automatically a good thing. It depends on the consequences. In the recent history of the University, adding layers of bureaucracy has

too often stifled initiative and created inaccessibility rather than responsibility. The chief of staff approach encourages initiative and responsibility by emphasizing coordination and cooperation rather than command and control.

The recent Noel Levitz and Campanella assessments spend very little time on the need to reorganize the University in any formal sense. In their eyes, the University's greatest organizational obstacle is its informal organizational culture. As the Campanella Report puts it in its advice about new UH leadership,

This new leadership, as well as leaders throughout the UH system must focus on what is possible, not what is comfortable or safe. When a new idea surfaces, the response must not be to ask skeptically *why?* But rather--and with renewed confidence--*why not?* And then people must determine how to implement these good ideas rather than finding reasons not to.... This is a time for new ideas, bold ideas; a time to challenge the status quo; a time to reward innovation and entrepreneurial thinking.

This is precisely the kind of leadership that President Dobbelle has encouraged both in his public statements and in his actions.

The Task Force recommendation for a Chief of Staff for Undergraduate Education is consistent with this kind of leadership. The Task Force approach helps create an atmosphere that encourages people and gives them the resources and responsibility for making the ideas work. The chief of staff process has the right combination of centralization and decentralization to encourage both boldness and responsibility. It very visibly puts responsibility for undergraduate education with the chancellor and gives the chancellor the tools to keep tabs and to exercise that responsibility effectively. At the same time, the chief of staff encourages security at the top to be filtered down. As a well

informed, trusted faculty member with an everyday working relationship with the chancellor, the chief of staff is in a position to build the networks of people needed to make changes and be responsible for implementing them. The chief fosters the attitude "let's cut to the chase and get this done." People will be encouraged, and no doubt some times put on notice, to cross old boundaries in order to get the job done.

There are at least three things that have to happen to make this Chief of Staff approach work. First, the chancellor must be actively and publicly committed to the chief of staff position and to the person holding that position. The chancellor must make it clear to the entire University community and beyond that (a) undergraduate education requires a special commitment and (b) this commitment is manifested through the chancellor and the chief of staff.

Second, the chief of staff must have the necessary team-building and advocacy skills. He or she must be a problem-solver and a person who knows how to work with conflict. The chief of staff must gain the trust of all key stakeholders.

Third, the chancellor has to give the management of this change a high and enduring priority. Considering the wariness and cynicism, it is easy to imagine the objections to this plan. As we implied in our list of obstacles, these objections emerge from an entrenched organizational culture that makes change difficult. Consequently, these objections should not be treated as simple compliance issues. They must be considered as something deeper, more understandable and more challenging. This involves unlearning old behaviors and adopting new ones.

To make the new commitment to undergraduate education work, it's absolutely essential that the chancellor develop a careful plan for making this change take place.

2) The Director of Enrollment Services

The Task Force recommends the immediate appointment of a Director of Enrollment Services. The scope and description of this director's formal duties should remain as they were listed in the recent director of enrollment services search. This director should report to the vice-chancellor of student services. To emphasize the importance of enrollment services, the title of the Vice-chancellor for Student Services should be changed to Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management.

Universities divide about evenly according to whether they place their enrollment management on the student services or academic side of their organizations. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. At UH there are compelling reasons for keeping it in student services. Some excellent enrollment management work has already taken place there. As the Campanella Report recommends, given the uncertainty about the organization of the academic side of undergraduate education, it makes good sense to keep enrollment services where they have already been placed.

No matter where this enrollment person is located, he or she must have the skills to work with academics, academic administrators as well as student services personnel. To make enrollment management work, the director of enrollment services must be able to build groups and networks of people from across campus. This, like our chief of staff model, goes against the grain of the existing organizational culture. Consequently, the chancellor should give the same careful attention to change management regarding these enrollment services.

3) Other Recommendations

There are many other important changes needed to reach our vision of undergraduate education. Many of these have appeared time and again in earlier assessments and reports. The first **four** recommendations should get the **highest priority in attention and funding**. These items are about especially pressing problems and particularly serious obstacles. Undergraduate education and services will not succeed without these high priority changes:

1. The University's student information system must be improved to become centralized, user-friendly, and comprehensive. The system should allow a student to get information in one stop and allow for self-monitoring of academic progress. This of course is a familiar recommendation. We want to stress how much the existing information system limits the improvement of student services across the board, from recruitment through graduation. An improved information system should be used as a key resource for reforming registration, student advising and financial aid.
2. The student/ adviser ratio must be improved, particularly for arts and sciences academic student services where the student/adviser load is presently four times the national average for similar universities.
3. Students need to have courses available to them to graduate on time.
4. There must be better student housing, and students must be able to find out in a more timely way whether they have housing or not. This involves changes in Board of Regents policies. It also requires changes in the formal and informal operations of those responsible for campus housing to make housing more compatible with students' needs. Students mention housing problems as a retention barrier.

We recommend other changes regarding undergraduate advising, mentoring and service:

--There must be much improved coordination between Manoa and community colleges regarding transfer, articulation, and academic requirements. The Campanella Report puts it simply but accurately: "There is not a good working relationship between Manoa and the community colleges." This is not simply the responsibility of the community colleges or Manoa. Someone needs to take responsibility for improving this working relationship.

--Retention and graduation rates should be improved for all students, with a particular concern to those underrepresented groups with low retention rates.

--The same kind of tutorial services that the athletic department has used so successfully should be made available to undergraduates throughout the campus.

--Career advising needs to be improved.

--There should be a mandatory and free orientation for all new students.

--The Faculty Senate must get the resources it needs to implement and monitor the new General Education Plan.

In regard to better working relationships between students and faculty, we recommend that:

--Teaching must become a more important criterion for tenure, promotion, and merit.

-There are more rewards for good teaching, and students should play a more active role in initiating and giving these rewards.

--Undergraduates play a bigger role in faculty research.

Finally, some recommendations on how to make this urban commuter campus more accessible and exciting in order to foster a sense of pride and greater opportunities to learn in the broader sense that good university campuses offer. There are key ways to make students as well as the community as a whole feel the University campus is a place to be, a site open to them:

--At the beginning of each academic year there should be an Opening Week on campus that celebrates the University and gets the students and community involved in this celebration.

--Improve parking for students and the community.

--Give the students the better seats for athletic events.

--Use the campus (both indoors and out) as a place where people want to gather. Some possibilities: having Open Market on campus; doing some of the same things that Mayor Harris has done to bring people who live here back to Waikiki.

--Offer more scholarships with the purpose of increasing the University's diversity.

There are ways to encourage organizations that could make this sense of belonging and pride of place happen:

--Make student government autonomous with full control over monies and budget. Students are much more likely to take part in building a campus community if they are empowered to run their own affairs in this meaningful way.

--Make more resources available for initiating student clubs.

--Create central as well as department gathering places for students.

--Generally develop a better system of communicating campus activities to the students as well as to the public at large.

--Reexamine food service policies and contracts, keeping in mind that they are an integral part of improving campus life.

CONCLUSION

We think that this should be the last report on undergraduate education written for quite a long time. The Task Force's own recommendations are both visionary and pragmatic. They require important and imaginative innovation yet are firmly anchored in the University's assets and obstacles. But whether or not you follow our recommendations, there are more than enough other available ideas on how things might get done.

The problem is not ideas but lack of initiative and a lack of focus on how to make ideas work. Every approach has its strengths and drawbacks. This Task Force feels very confident in what we have offered. Still, inaction on the part of the UH administration

would be far more harmful than taking actions that differ from our recommendations. The Chancellor and President have the opportunity to use a reaffirmation of undergraduate education as a model of how they will lead the University in the future. Their new leadership can and should move forward by demonstrating by their own actions that misgivings are challenges to be overcome and taking risks are actions to be rewarded.

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