



July 1, 2003

Evan S. Dobbelle  
President  
University of Hawaii System  
2444 Dole Street  
Honolulu, HI 96822

Dear President Dobbelle:

At its meeting June 19-20, 2003, the Commission considered the report of the team which reviewed the University of Hawaii System Office on March 17-18, 2003. In addition to the report of the evaluation team, the Commission had available to it the report and data portfolio submitted by the System Office in preparation for the review.

The System Office visit was developed at your request upon assuming the Presidency of the University and proved to be very useful. The purposes of the review were outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding dated February 26, 2003, between the University and the Commission. The System Office Review was coordinated with, and intended to be supportive of, the reviews at the three senior-level campuses of the University, scheduled to occur immediately after this review. The review process and the comments in this letter refer to issues relating to the accreditation processes of the Senior College Commission. The Commission understands that the University of Hawaii System maintains a separate relationship with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).

The special visit team to the System Office wrote a comprehensive report and identified a number of recommendations for further action. Recognizing that there is no accrediting action to be taken, the Commission nonetheless endorsed these recommendations as being important for further review and action since they will have significant impact on the functioning of the three senior-level campuses. In addition, it highlighted the following issues for attention:

**System Organization and Infrastructure.** Since your appointment as President, there has been a conscious and deliberate effort to create a formal System Office infrastructure to support all of the campuses of the University System. After some initial hires, a reorganization plan was presented to the Board of Regents formalizing a major restructuring of the University. The Commission understands that, subsequent to the March System Office site visit, the ACCJC has now

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approved those portions of the reorganization plan relating to it, although with substantial additional reporting requirements, this action allows the entire plan to move forward. Under this reorganization plan, Manoa and each of the campuses will have separate Chancellors who will meet regularly in a Council of Chancellors. System Vice President appointments have been made and, unlike in the past, they are not shared or joint-campus appointments. Thus, the System itself is developing an infrastructure and the goal of identifying and responding to those areas where there are System interests and where coordinated policies or practices are needed.

The System Office evaluation team found potential promise in this model but recognized that much further development needs to occur for the potential to be realized. The role of each Vice President and the relationship of the Vice Presidents to the campuses need to be more clearly defined and, as reflected by the campus reports, more clearly understood at the campus level. There is also need to identify the size of the staffs for each of these Vice Presidents, and it is evident that to perform the roles assigned to these officers, staff support may be needed. At the same time, there is a need to develop a clearer picture of the costs and sources of support for this new System infrastructure.

Under the reorganization plan, a number of new System-wide structures were created to improve communication and collaboration between and among campuses, including regular meetings of Chancellors, Academic Vice Chancellors, and leadership of campus faculty and student governments. These are important new undertakings that have great potential for communication, the sharing of good practices, and policy development. As found by all of the teams, however, their roles and jurisdiction are not well-developed or understood by participants at each of the campuses.

**External and Internal Governance.** At the time of the site visit and subsequently, there has been considerable transition on the Board of Regents. Even among existing Board members, there was an evident need for greater understanding of the changes underway and, as identified by the team, of an improved "partnership" with the Board of Regents. This is all the more important in light of the significant changes in Board membership. It will also be important for members of the Board of Regents to understand the roles and responsibilities of the two WASC Commissions in their interactions with the University, and a recommendation regarding this is made below. The team also recommended paying attention to other external constituencies and to issues of political endorsements and involvements. The Commission endorses these recommendations.

Internally, in addition to the comments made above, there is much work to be done to integrate the Community College and Senior College campuses into the System organization now approved and the intentional System-wide consciousness intended by these changes. Moving from concept to operational definition and implementation of these changes is the next step needed. Many questions were left unresolved at the time of the site visits regarding campus names; the roles, responsibilities and training for those in new positions; the relationship between System and campus staff; and the overlap in areas such as student

services and international programs, etc. The visiting team to the System Office, as well as visiting teams to the campuses, found that there was already a significant lack of clarity or outright confusion in each of these areas that was impacting the momentum and effectiveness started by these changes. In addition to the need for greater clarity, it will be important for the System and the Board to periodically review evidence of the effectiveness of these changes and, ultimately, of the System Office in meeting identified goals.

**Budgeting and Resource Allocation.** The University has had to deal with years of financial constraints caused by the availability and allocation of resources by the State and by the ambiguities of timing created by delays in receiving final determinations of the actual amount of State support and the conditions of that support. These are issues beyond the control of the University but it is important to acknowledge their impact.

At the same time, however, the Commission has several serious concerns regarding the budgeting, campus allocation, and financial monitoring processes of the University. Each of these issues arose as concerns in the System Office review and were confirmed, and even magnified, by the campus reviews. The team described the budgeting process as "flawed," and there is a need to develop a more coherent and orderly process for developing the University's budget, which, as recommended by the team, "establishes timelines, reporting formats, and clearly understood allocation principles."

In addition, in each of the reviews there was significant confusion over the rationale or operational basis for resource allocations to the senior-level campuses. Differences between campuses, despite enrollment changes, were neither explained nor understood. This has created serious issues identified by evaluation teams and has limited each of the campuses in orderly and effective planning and allocation of resources.

There also is concern over the level of financial monitoring and reporting within each campus and at the System level. While it is understood that the University budget is large, comprehensive and complex, there is a pressing need to coordinate budget controls and accountability at the campus and System levels. This issue was also identified in campus reviews and was the basis of concerns expressed in the Commission action letters to the campuses.

The issue may be lack of sufficient reporting and monitoring systems or one of lack of communication and understanding, or both. Regardless, these issues are of such importance that they warrant immediate and concerted attention and coordinated responses at the System and campus levels. The present situation puts each of the campuses accredited by the Senior College Commission in jeopardy of not being able to establish their compliance with Commission Standards regarding financial resources and oversight, financial integrity, and resource allocation linked to planning.

**Strategic Planning.** There has been effective and inclusive strategic planning at the system level and at each of the campuses. While the System Office team reported that enhanced funding for the System plan may not be available, it recommended that the University take steps to still use the plan, which was well-developed, to frame priorities and influence resource allocation decisions at the campuses and System levels. It will be vitally important to align these priorities with the distinctive missions of each of the three senior-level campuses and to allocate resources appropriately to fulfill those missions. To this end, there is a need for greater enrollment planning and identification of System-wide enrollment issues, such as improved articulation and transfer, balance of upper- and lower-division enrollments and undergraduate and graduate programs, for each campus and across the System. There is also a need to align these enrollment plans with each campus Strategic Plan and budget allocation.

**West Oahu campus.** In a separate letter to the West Oahu campus, a number of serious concerns were identified. In several cases, resolution of these concerns cannot be made without the leadership and support of System administration. While the accrediting action is related to that campus, there is a need for the System Office to give special attention to their resolution before the completion of that campus's accreditation review cycle.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the report of the Special Visit team;
2. Schedule a follow-up review for the spring of 2004, in coordination with the review scheduled for the Hilo campus, to learn about steps underway to address the issues identified in this letter;
3. Request that a briefing on the accreditation process be arranged with the senior System administration and the Board of Regents within the next six months to discuss the transition in membership of both and to help build greater understanding of the role of the Senior College Commission in its interactions with the Board, System Office, and senior-level campuses.
4. Request a meeting or a conference call with me and the senior leaders of the System administration within the next 90 days to discuss how these issues will be addressed and aligned with actions taken in response to the campus reviews.

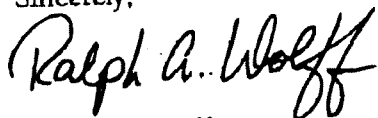
In taking this action, the Commission noted that, while the original review of the System Office was arranged at your request, the issues identified in this letter have a significant impact on the accreditation of each of the senior-level campuses. Thus, the follow-up review will be important to establish a better foundation for the Commission for actions it will take as each of the three senior-level campuses comes up for review in the next several years. In

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light of this fact, the Commission hopes that this action letter, along with the System Office team report, will be disseminated to the senior college campus leadership so that they use these documents along with their campus reports to develop both individual campus responses and a collective System response.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" at the end.

Ralph A. Wolff  
Executive Director

Cc: James R. Appleton  
Members of the team