



July 6, 1999

Kenneth P. Mortimer
Chancellor
University of Hawaii, Manoa
2444 Dole Street, Bachman Hall
Honolulu, HI 96844-2302

Dear Chancellor Mortimer:

At its meeting June 23-24, 1999, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team which visited the Manoa campus on March 16-19, 1999. The Commission had available to it the self study prepared by the University in preparation for the visit and your June 14, 1999 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the detailed response reflected in the attachment from Executive Vice Chancellor Smith. In addition, the Commission appreciated the opportunity to meet with Dr. Smith at the Commission meeting to discuss these materials and the current state of the University.

The Commission, and the evaluation team, find the University at a critical time in its history. The Manoa campus plays a significant role for higher education in the State of Hawaii, and more broadly, in the community of the State and the Pacific Basin. It is a valued resource to its many communities, and has a record of excellence in many of its programs providing education, research and community service. While recognizing the role of the University and its contributions, the University can no longer attempt to serve its many constituencies in so many varied ways with expectations of quality or excellence. Following five years of budget reductions and a continuing environment of economic instability, the recommendations of the visiting team are cast in urgent terms. This urgency calls for clear and sustained leadership throughout the institution built on effective processes of involvement and active engagement of appropriate constituencies. Further, there is a

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Kenneth P. Mortimer
July 6, 1999
Page 2

need for more effective patterns of communication throughout the institution. As stated by the evaluation team, the University has

suffered equally from both budget cuts and the delay in responding to those cuts.... However, while recovery is not impossible, it urgently requires hard decisions in the short term that will require quick reallocation, improved mechanisms and processes for campus communication for the long term, and special attention to real and perceived problems in governance and administration.

The Commission considers the situation of the University to be serious and immediate. The self study chronicles many reasons why the University was unable to galvanize concerted action over the past five years of reductions. The Commission finds that significant action by the University is required to maintain its quality and its current accredited status.

The evaluation team report establishes a useful foundation for institutional review and action, and its findings and recommendations are endorsed by the Commission. The University has many strengths to build on, including the evident dedication of the faculty and staff of the University, the efforts recently undertaken to strengthen the undergraduate curriculum, the beneficial student faculty ratio, and the increase in research generated by the University. The concerns raised by the evaluation team reveal, however, that even these strengths may not be sustained without considerable action and improvement. As the Commission reviewed the evaluation team report, and the University's response, it identified several issues to highlight:

The need for clarified and strengthened leadership throughout the institution. The report identifies serious issues with the governance and administrative structures of the University and the effectiveness of their operation. Key to moving the University forward will be clear leadership and action. The Commission expresses serious concern over several issues within this area. First, the role of individual Regents acting outside of formal action of the full Board of Regents needs to be addressed and clarified. Hard decisions cannot be made if University leadership is subject to individual Regent oversight.

Further, the role of the Executive Vice Chancellor as the primary officer for the Manoa campus needs to be clarified and codified in such a way that it can be

understood by all constituencies within the University. In what areas is the Executive Vice Chancellor fully authorized to speak and act on behalf of the Manoa campus? The team also identifies a strong need for greater administrative leadership for undergraduate education and for managing academic affairs.

Planning, Priority Setting and Action. The evaluation team commends the clarity of objectives and priorities established in the University strategic plan. At the same time, however, it also indicates that this plan was not established through active and widespread institutional involvement, nor does it appear to have the support of key institutional groups. The Commission supports the team's finding that, given the urgency of the situation, the University pursue the "4+4+4" plan, building engagement with campus constituencies. The issue, however, appears to be larger than gaining support for a specific strategic plan or budgeting action. The University does not appear to have developed effective systems for ongoing engagement of constituent groups nor for communication throughout the University. Rumor and partial information, and discussion and recommendation processes that have been started but not completed have become the norm. The University needs to demonstrate that it can engage its communities in planning, priority setting and action in order for it to recover from the results of budget reductions. The success of any plan of reallocation of resources and hard program decisions is dependent on effective processes of engagement and communication being in place.

Student and Educational Program Quality. The Commission is concerned by the apparent enrollment declines in undergraduate education and the issue of whether students admitted continue to meet the expected quality guidelines for Manoa undergraduates. The team reports that 41% of students admitted in 1998 did not meet all of the stated criteria for admission. There is an immediate need for the University to manage its recruitment and enrollment processes more actively.

Much more will be needed to realize the educational potential and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Manoa experience. In terms of the undergraduate education, UH Manoa will need to demonstrate how the research mission of the University is carried forward into the curriculum and student experiences. For example, in what ways is a Manoa education distinctive, especially for freshmen and sophomores? The efforts to create learning communities is a positive step, and the full

involvement of the faculty will be critical for its success. The Commission was also pleased by the team finding that attention has been given to improving writing and this area is being assessed well. An additional area of concern is meeting the information needs of students. Will the faculty, working with the library, provide students with adequate tools for information literacy?

Graduate student enrollment also appears to be declining, and the team reported that some disciplines do not award degrees each year. Moreover, the team reports that some departments, due to attrition and the continuing inability to hire additional faculty, do lack a sufficient core of full-time faculty to support the programs offered. Program reviews are not completed on schedule and program quality is highly variable, especially at the graduate level. As concluded by the team, hard decisions are needed as to which programs to support and which to consolidate in the face of these facts. These decisions are yet to be made. The decision reported to the Commission regarding shifting the School of Public Health into a program, following the loss of accreditation of that School, regardless of the merits of such action, reflects the need for more active and deliberative planning and action.

Assessment and the use of data. The University appears to have considerable data which could help inform decision making as changes are implemented, but such data are not widely disseminated or used, and the credibility of data is frequently challenged. Tied to the need for communication is the need for further discussion of the basic data on which financial and program decisions will be made. Further, the evaluation team has made a number of recommendations on ways to improve the existing foundation of data about students, their experience and learning achievement. The Commission endorses these recommendations and, as reflected by Commission discussions regarding the revision of its accrediting standards, places increasing emphasis on the institution's demonstration of educational effectiveness and student learning. In addition to the award of grades by individual faculty, a more systematic review of learning is required as well as demonstration of the effectiveness of University programs and activities to support student learning.

In taking action, the Commission reiterates its concern that the University demonstrate significant and substantive progress on these issues, and those identified as major

Kenneth P. Mortimer
July 6, 1999
Page 5

recommendations in the team report. As stated by the evaluation team, "If these several actions do not occur accreditation will soon be endangered."

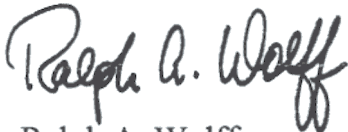
The Commission acted to:

1. Reaffirm the accreditation of the University.
2. Schedule a special visit to the University in the spring of 2002, addressing the issues stated in this letter and the major recommendations of the evaluation team. The format of the special visit report should follow that suggested in the enclosed memorandum. Four (4) copies of the report will be due two months before the visit.
3. The date of the next comprehensive visit will be established at the June 2002 Commission meeting.

Given the seriousness of the Commission's concerns and the need for the University community to address these issues collectively, the Commission urges that the University broadly distribute this letter and the team report to the Board of Regents and to key faculty, staff, administrative, and student leadership.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this action.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

RW/bm

cc: Marilyn P. Sutton
Thomas T. Bopp
Members of the Team

Enclosure