Defining Our Destiny entailed a series of carefully conceived events, celebrations, workshops, planning charrettes, and communication efforts. It involved both the recognition of local needs as well as the integration of global events. Our efforts at building and sustaining community came in the aftermath of September 11th. We organized a campus vigil in which thousands of students, faculty, staff, and members of our community gathered and marched throughout our campus. There had never been such a large gathering of people on the Mānoa campus. The combination of grief, confusion, fear, and uncertainty served to remind us of the importance of community, especially in a place such as Hawaii which is at once geographically remote and globally connected.

We began a series of initiatives to design a process for rebuilding our community. Under the leadership of Interim Chancellor Deane Neubauer, we launched a campus care day, in which faculty, students, and staff volunteered to pick up litter, sweep and wash sidewalks, weed, and garden in an effort to improve the physical appearance of our campus. It also provided an opportunity for different members of our community to work together.

We also launched a Listening Project in which senior members of the administrative team went to hear the concerns and issues of students, faculty, and staff members. We went to the dorms and to the dining halls. We held forums. We provided forms that people could mail, fax, or give to us with their comments on how we could improve our campus. We created a website with a bulletin board. We worked with the student newspaper and with all the key governance groups on campus and asked for their help and participation. We asked these groups to provide representatives to serve on our working groups and our strategic planning steering committee. At the same time, we convened many other task forces to address issues such as undergraduate education, the creation of a film school and an Honors College, and to advise us on matters such as enrollment management, recruitment and retention, and international education. Interim Chancellor Neubauer hosted receptions for students and faculty to gather, meet, interact, and provide further input into the planning process.

Next, we assembled a team of faculty members who were experts in designing and facilitating participatory processes. They came from business, planning, public administration, education, social work, and other relevant disciplines. We considered a range of different approaches such as the Search Conference, scenario planning, and other facilitation tools and approaches. This technical advisory committee helped to develop a process design which was first drafted then presented at various governance groups. We decided to utilize a version of Harrison Owen’s Open Space Technology, a wide-open, participatory planning technique in which there are four rules: 1) whoever comes are the right people; 2) whatever happens is the only thing that could have; 3) whenever it starts is the right time; and 4) it’s not over until it is over. Participants are
encouraged to identify issues of concern and interest, which are then posted at the “marketplace of ideas.” Other participants are invited to join up and form free-flowing discussion groups in which the ideas were recorded, entered on to a website, and used to formulate goals, strategies, and plans for the future. We held an Open Space event on February 1, 2002. More than 1,400 people participated in this event. That night, the campus also hosted an “Open Mike” night which featured faculty, students, and administrators performing music, poetry, dance, and theater. It received extensive media coverage and provided crucial input into our planning process.

Three working groups (Academic Affairs, Physical Environment, and the Social-Cultural-Spiritual) met throughout the academic year and developed draft reports in which they synthesized the input from the campus and community and developed key initiatives. Whenever possible, we encouraged faculty and classes to become involved in the planning process. Students and faculty from architecture, urban planning, engineering, social work, journalism, and other majors were invited to do class projects related to our campus planning initiatives. A steering committee worked to draft the strategic plan which was released for review at an unveiling celebration held on May 1st.

Comments on the draft plan were received and a revised version was developed in the Fall of 2002. The Mānoa Faculty Senate endorsed it in September 2002 and it was formally approved by the Board of Regents at the November 2002 meeting.

The campus events reflected a change in philosophy. It was a recognition that in order to involve and engage our faculty and students, we needed to first listen to their concerns and then provide new ways of fostering dialogue and interaction. We needed to build a climate of trust, respect, and collegiality. In the wake of a divisive faculty strike, following years of cutbacks and retrenchment policies, it was necessary to develop a new, more positive, more democratic, approach to campus planning and deliberation.