

MINUTES

BOARD OF REGENTS COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS MEETING

MARCH 3, 2021

Note: On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern, subsequently declaring it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. On March 16, 2020, Governor David Y. Ige issued a supplementary proclamation that temporarily suspended Chapter 92, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, relating to public meetings and records, "to the extent necessary to enable boards to conduct business in person or through remote technology without holding meetings open to the public."

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ernest Wilson called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. on Wednesday, March 3, 2021. The meeting was conducted virtually with regents participating from various locations.

Committee members in attendance: Chair Ernest Wilson; Vice-Chair Kelli Acopan; Regent Eugene Bal; Regent Wayne Higaki; and Regent Robert Westerman.

Others in attendance: Board Chair Benjamin Kudo; Regent Simeon Acoba; Regent Randy Moore; Regent Alapaki Nahale-a (ex officio committee members); President David Lassner; Vice President (VP) for Community Colleges Erika Lacro; VP for Legal Affairs/University General Counsel Carrie Okinaga; VP for Research and Innovation Vassilis Syrmos; VP for Information Technology/Chief Information Officer Garret Yoshimi; VP for Budget and Finance/Chief Financial Officer Kalbert Young; UH-Mānoa (UHM) Provost Michael Bruno; UH-Hilo Chancellor Bonnie Irwin; UH-West O'ahu (UHWO) Chancellor Maenette Benham; Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents (Board Secretary) Kendra Oishi; and others as noted.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regent Westerman moved to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2020, committee meeting and minutes of the January 7, 2021 joint meeting with the Committee on Personal Affairs and Board Governance, seconded by Vice-Chair Acopan, and the motion carried, with all members present voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Board Secretary Oishi announced that the Board Office did not receive any written testimony and that no individuals signed up to provide oral testimony.

IV. AGENDA ITEMS

Prior to commencing with the agenda, Chair Wilson remarked that this was the first meeting of the Committee on Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) since it held a joint

meeting with Committee on Budget and Finance (B&F) in January of 2021. Committees such as B&F and the Committee on Planning and Facilities have laid the groundwork and created the infrastructure that will allow ASA to begin its work in overseeing the university's academic programming to ensure that student needs are met. He stated that institutes of higher education across the nation have been evolving over the past year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, that the work of ASA is just beginning, and that the committee will need to focus its work on academic programming changes that will allow the university to continue meeting its core mission in addition to addressing the higher education needs of the State.

A. Student Caucus Presentation

Hae Okimoto, Associate Vice President (AVP) for Student Affairs, and advisor for the Student Caucus, stated that the Student Caucus is comprised of delegates from each of the university's ten campuses and serves to advocate collectively for the interests of all university students. She noted that the Student Caucus works diligently to communicate students' needs and concerns to the administration, as well as government officials, and introduced several student representatives who would be presenting their individual perspectives about the impacts of COVID-19 on the academic and personal lives of students.

Ms. Rene Hutchins, Chair of the Student Caucus; Ms. Taylor-Ann Okimoto, UHWO Student Caucus delegate and freshman; and Ms. Kealohilani Leleo, Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i - Leeward Community College president, Student Caucus delegate, and senior, presented the Student Caucus report. Ms. Hutchins stated that the intent of this presentation was to provide Regents with varying viewpoints concerning the impacts of COVID-19 from a diverse background of students.

Student Caucus representatives shared the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and spoke about their experiences over the past year, which included a mixture of both academic and personal challenges. In addition to adjusting to a fully online modality of instruction, students faced a number of issues including the lack of readily-available technology; conflicting and competing academic, family, and personal priorities; increased emotional and mental stress exacerbated by reduced health services on some campuses; loss of a traditional student experience; concern regarding finances; a lack of, or limited access to, campus support services; decreased motivation; and an inability to focus on the pursuit of academia given the events of the past year. They also identified several positive outcomes from the COVID-19 experience and the switch to online instruction including increased interaction with a larger and more diverse set of peers; increased accessibility to coursework more convenient to personal schedules; an increase in campus support services being provided online; and the realization of their own resiliency and strength.

Ms. Hutchins stated that Ms. Maura Stephens-Chu, the Graduate Student Organization delegate who was slated to provide the perspectives of graduate students, was unable to attend the committee meeting due to a scheduling conflict but wanted to inform the committee that graduate students faced similar challenges to those

expressed by undergraduates in addition to balancing these challenges with work, teaching, research projects, and family life.

Board Chair Kudo asked whether course instruction provided in a purely online manner as opposed to in-person course instruction impacted the ability of the students to learn course material. The student representatives replied that the switch to mostly online instruction did not compromise their ability to learn course materials. However, while classroom instruction allowed for full attention to be given to the course instructor, the numerous distractions encountered in a non-campus setting often made it difficult to maintain focus and concentration during online lessons. The students stated that this method of instruction required balance to be achieved between academic and personal life in order to keep pace with the requisite coursework which, at times, was difficult.

Noting Ms. Okimoto's status as a freshman at UHWO and a comment made about her inability to physically visit the campus due to its closure during the pandemic, Regent Acoba inquired as to whether she had been afforded an opportunity to view the UHWO campus via an orientation video or some other means. Ms. Okimoto responded in the affirmative noting that she attended a UHWO-produced livestream event that gave freshman a virtual tour of the campus. However, she stated that the inability to be physically present on campus and experience campus life through in-person interaction with other college students caused her to feel as if she were still in the transition period between high school and college.

Regent Acoba stated that online learning appears to be an isolating experience and asked whether course instructors provided opportunities for students to interact with each other during class. The student representatives responded that some instructors provided students with the chance to interact in class through the use of breakout rooms. However, in their experiences, students were less apt to participate in this interaction than if the classes were conducted in an in-person format.

Referencing a survey conducted in spring 2020 about the student experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges they faced, including challenges with services and support, Chair Wilson asked if there would be additional attempts to gather information from students on whether these issues and concerns have been addressed, as well as additional actions that the university can take to further improve the system. AVP Okimoto replied that the student surveys provided valuable insight and a plethora of information that allowed the administration to better understand the academic and personal challenges facing students and highlighted several steps already undertaken by the university to address these challenges. She stated that, with a year's worth of experience in the provision of online instruction, many campuses will be conducting further surveys that focus on the most common difficulties experienced by students to determine if actions that have been initiated to address these concerns are working and whether additional measures need to be taken. The various student governments were also acknowledged for their role in addressing some of the more personal issues facing students, including feelings of isolation and loneliness, by providing numerous online activities and virtual events that afforded opportunities for students to connect with their peers.

Chancellor Irwin, Chancellor Benham, Provost Bruno, and VP Lacro echoed the statements of AVP Okimoto noting that the surveys provided each of their units a better understanding of the issues, concerns, and unique needs of their students. They stated that each unit has experienced challenges related to broadband and adequate internet accessibility, as well as issues with the adequate provision of mental health, counseling, and other student services normally conducted in an in-person format. Work continues in addressing these issues. Additionally, survey results have been shared with faculty so that improvements can be made to the delivery of online instruction. It is expected that each unit will continue to meet with student and faculty leaders, in addition to conducting additional surveys that are focused on the main concerns expressed by students, to determine if the noted issues are being addressed and any next steps that must be initiated to provide the tools necessary for both students and faculty to experience academic success.

Regent Bal questioned whether students would prefer a return to in-person instruction, the continuation of remote learning, or a more hybrid form of course instruction once the current situation begins to normalize. The student representatives stated that their personal preference would be more of a hybrid type of instructional format that balanced the amount of in-person class opportunities with remote learning opportunities.

Vice-Chair Acopan asked whether the student representatives believed the university was providing adequate support for students and what one item students would request from the administration regarding academic support if the opportunity presented itself. The student representatives stated that continuing to provide flexibility for students to take courses with a credit/no-credit option, as well as increased empathy from faculty members about the personal impacts of COVID on a student's academic progress would be welcomed.

Regents recognized and acknowledged the outstanding work of the Student Caucus and thanked them for sharing their thoughts, ideas, and perspectives which provided a better understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 on students and student learning.

B. Plans for General Education (Gen Ed)

President Lassner stated that Gen Ed was defined as the general required curriculum regardless of major and provided a brief history of the development of the Gen Ed core requirements at the university. He stated that a review of Gen Ed requirements developed at UHM in the late 1990s, which have since been adopted by all ten campuses, unveiled concerns with dated content and program structure and governance, as well as transfer and articulation challenges between campuses. UHM initiated a project to revise its Gen Ed core requirements and after discussion with faculty groups is instead approaching Gen Ed reform through a systemwide initiative since curriculum requirements affect all campuses and students. A review of the plans, goals, timelines, process, and approach that will be taken to initiate the revamping of Gen Ed requirements was presented with President Lassner stating that faculty leadership across the university system is in support of these efforts. Once this work is

completed, the administration will be pursuing consultation on the proposed academic changes and seek approval from the board to initiate the proposed changes. Additionally, the administration is preparing to incorporate any proposed changes to the Gen Ed curriculum into its post-pandemic planning initiative.

Regent Moore remarked that he was glad to see contemplation being given to the inclusion of competencies in the Gen Ed curriculum in addition to content.

C. Small Program Report and Overview of Program Review Process

Debora Halbert, AVP for Academic Programs and Policy, provided a report on the annual small program review conducted by each campus, as well as required academic program reviews for the 2-year and 4-year campuses. She noted the overall impact of these reports in current unit-level planning for program redesign and collaboration, as well as determining plans for future academic programming. The small program report and list of program reviews that have been completed were provided in the meeting materials.

Regent Moore asked whether a process was in place to review small programs on a systemwide basis to determine if duplicative programs occurring on the different campuses could be combined into one program at a single campus. AVP Halbert replied that she believed this process was ongoing but would have to defer to President Lassner and VP Lacro to provide more specifics. President Lassner responded that this process is currently underway and is one of the issues that is being addressed by the administration's post-pandemic planning initiative. VP Lacro added that, at the community college level, the consolidation of similar programs and disciplines on multiple campuses is currently being discussed although there will be challenges with consolidating programs occurring on different islands.

Regent Acoba questioned how these reports related to the work being conducted at UHM in terms of restructuring curriculum. Provost Bruno replied that the information included in these reports is exactly what UHM has been using since last spring to make its determinations on consolidation of degree programs. AVP Halbert added that it was her understanding that each campus was using the information contained in these reports to continue to critically evaluate all of their programs in the context of the current situation facing the university with respect to the pandemic.

Regent Acoba asked whether board approval would be sought for the termination of degree programs. President Lassner replied that under current Regents Policy, the president has been granted the authority to stop-out, or terminate, degree programs and only requires the board to grant approval for starting new degree programs. Regent Acoba questioned how the board would be notified about programs that have been stopped-out. President Lassner responded that this information is provided to the board in the administration's annual report on program actions. Regent Acoba opined that the committee should review the feasibility of obtaining a report from the President on programs being considered for termination prior to a final decision being made to stop-out a program.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice-Chair Acopan moved to adjourn, seconded by Regent Westerman, and with all members present voting in the affirmative, the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/

Kendra Oishi
Executive Administrator and Secretary
of the Board of Regents