

## **MINUTES**

### **BOARD OF REGENTS COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS MEETING**

**JUNE 2, 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 12:02 p.m. on Wednesday, June 2, 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; and Regent Robert Westerman.

Committee members excused: Regent Wayne Higaki.

Others in attendance: Board Chair Benjamin Kudo; Regent Simeon Acoba; Regent Randy Moore (ex officio committee members); President David Lassner; Vice President (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; 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 March 3, 2021, committee meeting, seconded by Regent Bal, and noting the excused absence of Regent Higaki, 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**

##### **A. Academic Program Actions Report for 2019-2021**

Debora Halbert, Associate Vice President (AVP) for Academic Programs and Policy, explained that the academic program actions report, which covers new programs created, provisional programs and their transition to established status, program terminations, and stop-outs, is normally provided to the committee on an annual basis in accordance with Regents Policy (RP) 5.201. However, due to disruptions in the reporting cycle caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the administration has combined the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 reports into a single document. She briefly reviewed the current program proposal process and noted that, in academic years 2019 and 2020, there was one new provisional academic program approved by the board; 13 authorizations to plan new academic programs; 5 provisional programs granted established status; 31 extensions of provisional programs; and 31 program terminations. While the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in greater scrutiny and critical evaluation of programs for stop-out or termination and a slowing down of proposals for new programs, most of the provisional programs already in existence are on track for permanent status. A detailed listing of academic program actions taken over the past two years was provided in the meeting materials.

Stating that concerns have been expressed by students regarding the stopping-out or termination of programs, Vice-Chair Acopan requested clarification on the process used to determine whether a program will be terminated or stopped-out and asked where students could be referred to voice their concerns. AVP Halbert replied that decisions about future academic programming including program redesign, collaboration, stop-out, or termination are made at the campus level and usually occur after an annual small program review is conducted by each campus. President Lassner added that, when a decision is made to stop-out or terminate a program, students already in the affected program are afforded the opportunity to complete their course of study.

**B. Review and Recommend Board Approval to Change from Provisional to Established Status: Bachelor of Environmental Design (BEnvD) at UHM**

Chair Wilson stated that, at the request of the administration, the proposal to change the status of the BEnvD degree at UHM from provisional to established will be taken up at a later date.

**C. Progress on Academic Program Planning**

President Lassner explained that, while the administration was in the process of developing a multi-year academic plan in order to better align academics with planning for enrollment, facilities planning, and fiscal planning, the experiences of the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that this type of long-range planning document would be of little value for the university, its students, or the board. While academic program planning is ongoing, the administration thinks that a more useful approach would be for each academic unit to continue working on their respective academic program plans while remaining cognizant of actions occurring at other units through effective communication and collaboration. Through this process, it is believed that the university will be able to rapidly tackle fiscal pressures while retaining the ability

to quickly adapt programs to meet existing and emerging educational needs, as well as addressing ever-changing educational and workforce situations.

Tammi Oyadomari-Chun, AVP for Academic Affairs for Community Colleges, Chancellor Irwin, Chancellor Benham, and Provost Bruno provided detailed information on academic program planning activities occurring in each of their respective units which included significant engagement of faculty and staff. They stated that while each unit has unique needs and challenges, there are also cross-campus commonalities that provide opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of higher education in Hawai'i. It was noted that the goal of these efforts is to position the university for success in meeting Hawai'i's post-pandemic educational and workforce needs through the strengthening of academic programs and support services to increase enrollment and student success while achieving cost-savings that is critical to the financial health of the university. Many of the actions being taken, and recommendations being made, at the unit level involve the creation of campus strategic plans; streamlining programs through program and curriculum revisioning, redesign, and realignment; centralization of administrative operations; cross-campus sharing of course and program delivery; establishing external partnerships; aligning learning outcomes; consolidation of degree programs and concentrations; and an adaptive refocusing of educational efforts on the student learner. Academic program planning processes undertaken will enable the university to continue providing a quality education and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the people of Hawai'i.

Regent Acoba left at 12:30 p.m.

Referencing the amount of federal stimulus funds being received by the university, Regent Moore asked about the extent to which the general university community understands that this is a transitory event and is not a long-term solution for the university's financial stability. Provost Bruno replied that, regardless of the receipt of federal stimulus funds and actions taken to mitigate the impact of legislative reductions to its general fund allocation in the biennium budget, the university will face dramatic and permanent funding reductions in fiscal year 2024 and beyond. It is not anticipated that the State will fill this future gap in funding, which equates to approximately \$30 million per year for UHM. Each of the academic units has been underscoring the fact that difficult decisions will need to be made over the next two years to ensure the financial viability of the university. The university also has two years to demonstrate success in revenue generating activities which may assist in mitigating the impacts of budget cuts, and each unit is striving to improve their performance in this area.

Chair Wilson requested edification on the Education Advisory Board (EAB) and the services they provide to the university. Chancellor Benham replied that EAB Enrollment Services is a third-party vendor used by the university that combines smart recruitment, marketing, and prescriptive analytics with strategic support to help colleges fulfill enrollment goals. UHWO has used their services to focus primarily on traditional students and build its application pool with a wider variety of potential students not only in Hawai'i but also outside of the State. Since it began working with EAB, applications have soared and UHWO is working diligently to transform those applications into registrations, thereby increasing overall enrollment.

Chair Wilson remarked that he was heartened by the significant engagement of faculty and staff incorporated in the academic program planning processes noting that inclusivity in the decision-making process on the campus level is an important issue that is often raised in discussions on this matter. While there is always room for improvement, he praised the administration for doing an outstanding job on this issue.

Acknowledging that not all stakeholders will be pleased with the direction chosen by each campus or academic unit, Regent Bal asked whether the ultimate responsibility for the decisions regarding changes to academic programs resides in the chancellors or VP for community colleges, or are these decisions being made at an even higher administrative level. President Lassner replied that decision-making responsibility in this area is situational. While decision-making authority has been fully delegated to the chancellors and VP for community colleges on numerous issues affecting their respective campuses, there are some decisions that may have statewide impacts or impacts to programs at other campuses of the university system that may require more discussion at a higher administrative level. He stated that the leadership team currently in place at the university is committed to working together as a system to meet the goals and needs of both the system and state.

Regent Westerman commended the chancellors, VP for community colleges, and the entire university administration for their work on this issue stating that the collaborative work among campus and unit leadership to improve the entire university system was evident. He opined that the university was fortunate to have the administrative team currently in place. Although not everyone will be satisfied with some of the decisions made, he believed that difficult times requires the making of difficult decisions and that the administration was up to this task. Chancellor Benham and Chancellor Irwin thanked Regent Westerman but also stressed that this was a collective effort and recognized the work of faculty, staff, students, the university system, and community stakeholders in this endeavor.

#### **D. General Education (Gen Ed) Redesign Update**

AVP Halbert provided an update on the systemwide Gen Ed redesign initiative to address concerns with dated content and program structure and governance, as well as transfer and articulation challenges between campuses. She stated that President Lassner initiated a month-long Summer 2021 Gen Ed Institute (Summer Institute) that was tasked with examining and revamping the Gen Ed curriculum at the university and spoke about both the aspirational and operational guiding principles being used throughout the redesign process. It was noted that membership of the Summer Institute's Gen Ed Curriculum Design Team was recruited and selected through faculty and student governance groups and includes 14 faculty members and three undergraduate students representing a broad spectrum of disciplines on all ten campuses of the university system.

Dr. Christine Beaulé, Director of the Gen Ed Program at UHM, provided an overview of the process, plans, and timelines being used by the Summer Institute in its efforts to redesign the Gen Ed curriculum. She also highlighted a number of goals of the Summer Institute including the identification of a proposed curricular model; selection of

key competencies for all students, at both the 2 and 4-year levels; development of definitions, hallmarks, and student learning outcomes for these competencies; and creation of a more simplified core curriculum that clearly demonstrates the value of the chosen competencies and reduces the existing bureaucracy of the Gen Ed core curriculum. Several Gen Ed curricular models used at other institutions of higher education that employ a multi-faceted approach to satisfying Gen Ed core curriculum requirements were discussed. Once the work of the Summer Institute is completed, the administration will be pursuing consultation on the proposed academic changes throughout the 2021-2022 academic year and thereafter will seek board approval to initiate the proposed changes. Implementation of a new Gen Ed curriculum, if approved, will take place over a period of approximately three years and include curriculum-building and the development of a governance structure to ensure that a Gen Ed committee or board exists on faculty governance boards at every campus. Time must also be allotted for the transition to the new curriculum requirements. Additionally, consideration may need to be given to amendments RP 5.201 to accommodate the redesign of the Gen Ed curriculum.

President Lassner commented that the efforts to redesign the Gen Ed curriculum were received with initial enthusiasm by faculty leadership across the university system but concerns have been raised regarding the consultative process once a proposal is finalized for discussion. This will also require a careful review of RP 5.201 since, for over two decades, Gen Ed has been considered a campus matter subject under this policy and subject to board approval. With the increase in importance of transfer and systemwide collaboration, the new project is based on a new systemwide approach to establishing Gen Ed core curriculum requirements.

#### **E. Committee Annual Review**

Chair Wilson referenced the committee annual review matrix provided in the materials packet and asked for comments from committee members. Hearing none, he stated that, although the committee did not hold as many meetings as some of the other board committees over the past academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it still continued to work in overseeing the university's academic programming to ensure that student needs were met. Institutes of higher education across the nation have been evolving over the past year because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the university, like its peer institutions, will need to focus on academic programming changes to continue meeting its core mission. He also thanked the members of the committee, board staff, and the administration for all of their work over the past year.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Regent Bal moved to adjourn, seconded by Regent Westerman, and noting the excused absence of Regent Higaki, and with all members present voting in the affirmative, the meeting was adjourned at 1:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/

Kendra T. Oishi  
Executive Administrator and Secretary  
of the Board of Regents