

Envisioning the University of Hawai'i's Identity in 2057: The 150th Anniversary of the Institution

Brandon Marc Higa, J.D., Andy Lachman, Ph.D., and Thomas Scheiding, Ph.D.

UH President's Emerging Leaders Program 201



Background & Research Question

The University of Hawai'i's commitments to certain organizational classifications shape our institutional identity (i.e., land/sea/space grant institution, Minority Serving Institution classifications, and Title III). Within the context of these intertwined identities, the PELP 201 Far Futures Group considered how UH will evolve over the next 30-50 years.

What will the University of Hawai'i look like on its 150th anniversary in 2057?

- What is possible because of the identities we have embraced?
- How will UH's research and teaching agenda synergize in the future and support our identity?
- How does our relationship with external partners in the state, business community, and community organizations shape UH?

Method

- To create a vision of the identity of the University of Hawai'i in 2057, we used methods from the field of Futures Studies. These approaches allow for the systematic investigation of the future and enable us to shape our path to a preferred future.
- While several methods can be used to investigate the future, we used the technique of scenario planning. This method involves creating a set of scenarios with distinct frameworks and guidelines that provide direction in determining potential outcomes.
- We created four scenarios: a very good scenario, a good scenario, a bad scenario, and a very bad scenario. These scenarios were informed by varying levels of resources, public support for education, and levels of leadership. Narratives were then created for each scenario.

Very Good

Scenario 1 - Very Good: Enrollment is strong, sources of funding are diverse and grow at sustainable rates, programmatic offerings are diverse and serve the needs of students, businesses, and the state.

Contributing factors for this scenario to occur include increases in support for higher education, increases in public opinion of higher education, new industries in Hawai'i partnering with UH, large donations, and stable forward thinking leadership. Federal government invests additional resources into Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

Four Possible Future Scenarios

Bad

Scenario 3 - Bad: The university may have one or two positive features (such as reactive programs), but there is a significant series of problems in an area such as enrollment or funding that require significant intervention.

Contributing factors for this scenario are demographic shifts, a decrease in public opinions of higher education, scandals, and poor or unstable leadership.

Federal government merges all MSI classifications, resulting in UH competing for federal funding with other institutions for funding, including HSIs (Hispanic Serving Institutions) and HBCUs (Historic Black Colleges & Universities) with higher enrollments and greater lobbying capacity.

Good

Scenario 2 - Good: This represents the status quo. Most of the university is growing at a sustainable rate, but there are a few issues such as stagnant enrollment or an over-reliance on funding from the state.

The contributing factors in this scenario is largely centered around a business-as-usual mindset and a lack of significant changes in outside influences. The federal government maintain MSI status at current levels; UH retains dual Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian (ANNH) & Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander (AANAPISI) designations.

Very Bad

Scenario 4 - Very Bad: There are significant problems across the university that threaten operations and alter the identity significantly.

Contributing factors for this scenario are adverse impacts of climate change, political unrest, decreases in public opinion of higher education, scandals, severe economic downturn, and poor or unstable leadership.

Federal government eliminates all MSI classifications (or ANNH & AANAPISI in particular) in an effort to promote equity and equality, regardless of race, ethnicity, and national origin. This decision would result in UH losing access to more than \$50 million annually in federal infrastructure building grant funding.

Challenges and Uncertainty

- Resource challenges from decreased legislative appropriations (when in the current environment, Hawai'i has among the highest per capita public support for higher education), less tuition & fee revenue, and the management of external funds.
- Policy uncertainty surrounding the treatment and definition of Minority Serving Institution classifications (AANAPISI & ANNH). This definition will dictate some of the resource allocation via federal agencies.
- Structural design uncertainty for the 10-campus system.

Conclusions & Takeaways

Far Futures planning gives UH a powerful tool to project 30+ years into the future to set its long-term vision and consider how to align its vision to achieve these transformative changes. We must look beyond the traditional strategic planning cycle of 3-5 years to ensure UH is heading in its intended direction.

We offer the following recommendations:

- UH Board of Regents expand its strategic planning to include a long-range (i.e., Far Futures) component. Regents may serve two consecutive five-year terms, which spans several strategic planning cycles and would benefit from Far Futures planning for continuity.
- The University, in general, should engage in Far Futures planning at various levels of the organization to allow for actions to be taken earlier, resulting in significant changes occurring beyond the shorter outlook term.

Resources & Acknowledgements

We thank and acknowledge Dr. Debora Halbert as our mentor for this project, as well as UH President David Lassner and the PELP Advisory Committee for convening the inaugural PELP 201 cohort.