



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
HILO

UH HILO 2018 STRATEGIC PLANNING LISTENING TOUR

Meeting with UHH Ambassadors

May 30, 2019

This note represents a summary of the meeting held with UHH ambassadors as part of a 2018-2019 Listening Tour. The intention of the tour is to help inform the next UH Hilo Strategic Plan. The summary reflects the collection of comments made by individuals participating in the session. The order of the note may not necessarily reflect the order of the discussion.

Question 1: *When you were first introduced to UH Hilo, what was attractive to you? What drew you to the University?*

- In high school, my desire was to be a landscape architect. I realized that we live in Hawaii and there's little need for landscape architects – we need a tree, we plant it. Playing and Phys Ed were my passions so that's the direction I went. I started noticing that the spine of our commerce in Hilo was going to be non-existent if people didn't get involved. In 1968, Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma had a basketball team that influenced the growth and awareness of their campus through sports. We needed a way to build the University so our economy wasn't so reliant on the plantations. UHH had 700 students and we feared that it would be unable to withstand the collapse of the sugar industry. I shared the idea that through athletics we could grow this university and I was considered by some to be a crazy person. I got involved on an advisory board for Hilo College. I formed the booster club and I spoke to every service organization in town. I told them, "If we develop this, we can provide economic development opportunities for your businesses. Come to the games, cheer for your team, and show your spirit."
- The community feeling was innate to Hilo's identity. I remember growing up as a kid on Haili Street near the Boys & Girls Club. There was a UH Hilo extension there. When I was in high school we would hear a lot of kids say, "You spend one or two years here and then you go to Honolulu." Hilo was looking for an economy and sugar was dying. I remember being at a community meeting to talk about this issue and there were around 500-600 people there. Then-Mayor Kimura passionately said, "Nothing is more significant or important to this island and future of our economy than the expansion of Hilo College to a 4-year program, even more than having an airport." I remember people cheering and the entire place just went up in a roar. I'm not sure where that enthusiasm, that pride, went. John Waihee was

running for Governor in the 1980's and I became his Hawaii Island liaison. There were a lot of conversations surrounding the sugar industry, "Sugar's going down, what we going to do?" There was a conversation in Hilo with the HIEDB (Hawaii Island Economic Development Board). Harvey was working with Rick West, Bob Bethea, Richard Henderson and the question was, "What will we do with Hilo?" And Waihee said, "if they want this to happen, they gotta do it themselves." That's where it started, and we moved forward with an education economy and athletics as a community tie. After the Governor's term, I came back to UH Hilo to teach. I then spent 23 years in University Relations. There was a mindset then that there was potential for growth here. We've lost sight of that. I was told UHH can't have an M.A. in Education. I said, "This is community driven." We worked with the Regents and the administration and we banded together to make it happen. Harvey said Hilo first. That's the character of a leader. That's how Rose Tseng was. She felt that we gotta do for Hilo, no matter what. Manoa was the Goliath and Hilo was the David. Maui and Kauai banded together with Hilo. Political connections matter here. You need to look for a leader with external connections and skills, not just an internal focus.

Question 2: *What value does your relationship with UH Hilo create?*

- I don't want this campus to be as good as Manoa. I want it to be more and better than Manoa. UH Hilo can be more, it can be better.
- Connecting the community and UHH in order to benefit both. Working together, we built a strong relationship between the community of Hilo and the University.

Question 3: *During your time associated with UHH, there have likely been peaks and valleys. Reflect on a high point when you felt most alive, most engaged, most proud. Tell us the story.*

- Forming the booster club and mobilizing the community to work together to grow UHH and the economy together. Coach Yagi and the teams that went on the championship games were UHH basketball heroes and Dwight "Mits" Sumida who was an assistant for years was an unsung hero. Athletics was the key to amplifying pride and awareness and it springboarded the campus. Everyone back then believed they were part of this university. They were part of it and they owned it. It was a grassroots effort and it worked because the community got behind it. Many of the things that were accomplished were not on the Board of Regent's list, but happened because they were community driven.
- I remember Harvey calling me once in my second year at UHH to say we got \$800K to spend for UH Hilo (equivalent to ~\$4M today). I stayed up all night putting together a plan, then jumped on a plane and flew to the legislature where the finance staff and WAM (Hawai'i Senate Ways & Means) staff were discussing it and we put the funding to positions and staffing. One of the positions we created was a Vice Chancellor for academic affairs, because the Chancellor was doing everything. In 10 years, 48 positions were created. Seven of those positions were from UH side and the remaining ones were from Harvey's push for Hilo FIRST.

Question 4: *What are the forces and factors that contributed and helped make this high point possible?*

- Circular or nonlinear thinking
- Community involvement, investment, and passion
- Showing up
- Strong teams, boards, and UHH advocates across the Island and the State
- Ability to understand System language and navigate politics

Question 5: *Now, reflect on a low point. Tell us that story. What were the forces and factors that led to this low-point experience?*

- Seeing the lack of development of the parcel of land and the project being written off as too difficult, when you know that it is possible with the right leadership and team in place. It is a disservice to all the individuals involved and to this state to get this far to not do anything with it. It was executive ordered by the State to happen.
- Seeing the relationships between the community and UHH deteriorate, boards dissolve, and the fact that we've lost sight of UHH's potential for growth.

Question 6: *If UHH could significantly reduce low points and more fully develop high points in our relationship with our alumni/alumnae and other stakeholders, what might we accomplish?*

- Vulcan Village could provide a student night scene and activities. UH could create an endowment fund using the monies and do a net lease for \$20k/mo for a plot of 200sf @ \$1 sf and even at that low of a level it would equate to \$2.4M a year. A lease agreement with a developer for 30-year / 32-year lease and after 35 years you would have an endowment fund created. Work with OHA on how they are interested in being compensated. Some of the funds could go to OHA scholarships to deserving UH Hilo students.
- Grow UHH to a student population of 5,000-6,000.
- A vibrant campus where students want to be and the community feels is their school, whether they attended school there or not.
- Businesses and business leaders active with UHH, serving on boards, advocating for the University, and proud of their association with the school.
- We would have an exciting, first-rate, international campus that other UH campuses would look to as an example.

Question 7: *What are the large obstacles that need to be addressed in order for us to build stronger relationships with stakeholders and make progress as a university? (Note: These are the large boulders in our path that must be moved to make progress.)*

- Remove any out-of-state student cap that is in place.
- Find a developer (someone who is creative and understands the realities of construction and development) and assemble a capable team to begin work on the parcel of land. When you run into the sense that Vulcan Village can't work because of 'x, y, z', consider reversing the thinking and talk to the community who can shed light, because there will be pushback internally. You need someone who can understand development. Talk to Ben Tsukazaki's

(deceased, land-use attorney with an extensive history of assisting major developments to gain permit approvals) partners, Tom Yeh and other attorneys who work in development. The new Chancellor should also pick Harvey Tajiri's brain about this project. Ford Fuchigami, the Governor's former administrative director, would be a great resource. Tie the project to the need to augment or reduce our dependence on state funds. Also, explore the visitor-based tourist market. Connect to a hotel. Work with Ross Birch, executive director of the Island of Hawaii Visitors Bureau. Partner with the major hoteliers who could work leases. There are examples out there of universities working with for-profit hotels in other places. This development opportunity would radically change UHH and impact enrollments. It has the potential for a small hotel, a night life scene, convention/visitor center, shopping and dining, and many employment and internship opportunities for students. This project could become a template for other UH campuses. (The parcel has University zoning. Water and other utilities are reachable or in place. It is a disservice to all the individuals who worked to make this happen and to this state to not do anything with this land.)

- Set a goal and develop a plan to grow UHH to 5,000-6,000 students (a figure that some studies indicate to show greater economies of scale for building out effective programs).
- We need boldness rather than a cookie-cutter approach. We need to think outside the box and pursue private funds.
- Look at programs and determine what is needed, like Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, or Engineering, and make sure our strong opportunities are not gobbled up by West O'ahu.

Question 8: *If there were one or more smaller actions we might take right away to build stronger relationships with stakeholders, where would you start? (Note: These are the small stones in our path that we might move in order to speed progress.)*

- The new strategic plan shouldn't sit on a shelf.
- Team building has to be a priority, for teams both on campus and off. The System tends to be Oahu centric. You must build ties with the other campuses, the Governor, Legislature, Regents, and community leaders.
- Put a University Relations position in place, like Director of College and Community Relations. (Buddy Soares was a Senator and got the job in UHH UR. He knew the Honolulu scene – he didn't know the Big Island but he knew how to make things happen. He created the Chancellor's Advisory Board and pulled together the Chambers, contractor's association, Board of Realtors, business people. As a group, we would meet and share a bucket list of what's important. We had a packet of what the priorities were and we emphasized the importance of getting everyone on the same page. It was the network that made things happen. Every week, another group would bring the bucket list to the Legislature and we were all singing the same song.)
- The new Chancellor should not get caught in the weeds. She needs to rely on her VCs to handle many on campus issues while she stays at a high level, focused on external connections. Create advisory groups who can help mobilize efforts. Focus on quality relationships.

- Expand marketing efforts. As late as 2009, new faculty were featured each year on the front page of the newspaper.
- Discover if all scholarships are currently being awarded. If not, could those dollars be shifted to chairs?
- Invest in successful programs and they will pull up the programs that aren't as successful.
- Begin thinking long term. We are in crisis mode and seldom think beyond the latest crisis.
- Reestablish an Alumni Program that will help build relationships in the community.
- The North Hawai'i Education and Research Center (NHERC) in Honoka'a is being transferred from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo to Hawai'i Community College. UHH should continue to have a presence to ensure a pathway for those looking for a 4-year degree.

Questions and comments may be directed to
 Kathleen Baumgardner, Strategic Planning Project Manager
kbaumgar@hawaii.edu Phone: 808-932-7916
 Office location: PB 13-337D-D4

Strategic Planning website: <http://www.uhh.hawaii.edu/strategicplan>