

**WSCUC TEAM**  
**SPECIAL VISIT REPORT**  
**HAWAI'I PACIFIC UNIVERSITY**

**October 29 – November 1, 2019**

**Team Roster**

**Michael L. Jackson, Vice President Emeritus  
and Professor of Higher Education, University of Southern California; Chair**  
**Richard C. Giardina, Trustee, Notre Dame de Namur University,  
and Retired Assoc. VPAA, San Francisco State University; Assistant Chair**  
**Peter A. Michell, Board Member, Kaiser Permanente School of Allied Health Sciences,  
and Retired VP and CFO, Saint Mary's College of California**  
**Eleanor Dantzler Siebert, Professor Emerita, Mount Saint Mary's University**  
**Richard Osborn, Vice President, WSCUC; Staff Liaison**

**The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WSCUC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Institutional Context:** Hawai'i Pacific University is an independent, not-for-profit, comprehensive university. It is located on the island of O'ahu in Hawai'i and has just over 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students (fall 2019 headcount 4,170). It received full accreditation from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) in 1973 and has remained continually accredited. It is Hawai'i's largest private university, with over 25% of undergraduates coming from in-state.

Originally founded as Hawai'i Pacific College in 1965, it achieved university status in 1990. The university includes five colleges: Business, Health and Society, Liberal Arts, Natural and Computational Sciences, and Professional Studies. It offers more than 40 undergraduate degree programs, 17 master's degrees, and a doctorate of nursing practice (DNP). Its downtown campus comprises buildings in the center of Honolulu's business district, with a triangle of downtown complexes presently completing more than 80% of the institution's master plan to center all HPU programs in downtown Honolulu. The university plans to terminate its academic presence at its suburban Hawai'i Loa Campus by 2021, while continuing to maintain an Oceanic Institute and program offerings on seven military installations across the island of O'ahu.

After the arrival of its new president in July 2016, the university undertook and completed a Strategic Plan for 2017-2027 entitled **Shaping a Future of Innovation, Excellence, and Engagement**. Stemming from that plan, it proceeded to develop an Academic Strategic Plan including recently-implemented programs in electrical and

bioengineering and in educational leadership and plans to offer both a second and a third doctoral program (a PsyD in 2020 and a DPT in 2021).

The university has continued to face both enrollment and financial challenges, with enrollments declining from almost 6,000 students (fall headcount 5,827) in 2014 to just over 4,000 (fall headcount 4,170) in 2019. According to the institutional report: “The decline in mainland students will likely result in a \$1.5 million shortfall from previous planning estimates. This amount accounts for approximately 3% of total revenue. While in an ordinary year this would not be of great concern, next year HPU’s bond covenants come back online after a two-year respite, and the shortfall will necessitate additional budget cuts and revenue generation efforts in order to ensure the university meets the covenants.” Additionally, as the report stated: “HPU’s FY 2018 audited operating deficit was, in fact, \$7.5 million, though better than the board approved budget of an \$8.6 million operating deficit. The budget for FY 2019 [includes] an operating deficit of \$6.6 million. Results are projected to be better than budgeted for FY 2019 based on year-to-date performance.” It was, however, noted that updated financial results shared with the team during its visit indicate a draft audited operating deficit of \$10.7 million for FY 2019.

**Accreditation History and Commission Recommendations:** The accreditation of the university was last confirmed in July 2016 for a period of six years, with a Special Visit to occur in fall 2019. In its Action Letter, the Senior Commission identified the following issues as the focus of university attention and the WSCUC team’s visit:

1. Significant turnover among senior and mid-level administrative positions and significant faculty and staff reductions, plus numerous vacant positions resulting in the need for “stabilization” of all university personnel at adequate levels;
2. Significant operating and non-operating deficits that have contributed to a reduction in unrestricted net assets and the need for strategies to achieve financial stability;
3. Inadequate timely, consistent, inclusive, and transparent communication engaging all stakeholders and the need for major improvement of institutional communications efforts;
4. Major enrollment declines and the need to improve processes and programs to address these declines and improve retention and graduation rates;
5. Fast-paced changes occurring at the institution necessitating a new, collegially-developed, comprehensive, data-driven strategic plan and subsidiary university plans emanating from it; and
6. Student dissatisfaction with the Student Advising Program and the need for a “first-rate advising program that meets students’ needs.”

**Team Process.** The WSCU visiting team reviewed the Institutional Report during a detailed conference call on October 18, 2019. The review was hampered by the lack of any hyperlinks to supporting documentation and, in fact, by the lack of any supporting documentation until approximately two months after the report itself was received. The team was also hampered with conflicting enrollment data, which was not resolved until the visit itself.

The team conducted its Special Visit review on the HPU downtown Honolulu campus from October 29 to November 1, 2019. Meetings were held with university executive leaders, program and office administrators, trustees, faculty, staff, students,

deans, department chairs, and external auditors. Additional meetings were held with the Shared Governance Strategic Planning Oversight Committee, the Shared Governance Student Success Oversight Committee, and the Student Advising Task Force. The team also reviewed data and documents included in the institution's "virtual exhibit room" and emails sent to the confidential email account. It concluded its visit with an exit meeting with numerous members of the university community.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION ONE: PERSONNEL**

*"That the university complete its hiring processes at the senior administrative level as soon as possible and stabilize its faculty and staffing levels to allow it to adequately support, improve, and advance its programs. (CFR 3.1, 3.2)"*

The president, with support from the Board of Trustees, now has a senior leadership team in place. It is key that they remain at the institution for an extended period of time and successfully implement initiatives that are underway to improve institutional effectiveness and attain financial stability. For example, the university had three provosts in eighteen months. The permanent provost is now on board and is fully engaged in supporting the president's vision and strategies for stabilizing HPU, including further strengthening shared governance practices, improving communication, and providing leadership for academic planning and programs.

Progress has also been made in stabilizing the faculty and staff, as layoffs have diminished and the reorganization of offices and workloads seems to be taking hold. Clearly these developments will need to be monitored closely by the senior leaders to sustain the positive momentum that is underway.

As a result of the above developments, overall institutional morale is better than was found during the last team visit. That said, there is still tension between the faculty and the administration and Board of Trustees because of a lack of merit salary increases for faculty and staff during the last seven to nine years. Staff appear to have similar issues, though perhaps not as vocally articulated.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TWO: FINANCES**

*“That, to achieve financial stability, the university accelerate existing strategies and formulate new ones to achieve financial stability. (CFR 3.4)”*

A review of audited financial statements through the 2018 fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, and draft audited financial statements for the 2019 fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, indicate that HPU has continued to incur operating deficits since the team’s last visit in February 2016. These financial statements indicate an operating deficit of \$7.5 million for the 2018 fiscal year (revenues of \$77.7 million and expenses of \$85.2 million) and \$10.7 million for the 2019 fiscal year (revenues of \$75.4 million and expenses of \$86.1 million).

The team noted that some of the \$10.7 million operating deficit for the 2019 fiscal year reflected a strategic decision by HPU to advance some expenditures in the 2019 fiscal year that would have normally been incurred during the 2020 fiscal year. Interviews with senior leadership and members of the Board of Trustees indicate that this decision was made to help ensure compliance with bond covenants that will be calculated at the end of the 2020 fiscal year; (bond covenant compliance will be discussed in more detail later in this section of the report).

Recurring operating deficits have continued to reduce the university's net assets in every fiscal year since the team's last visit, except for the 2017 fiscal year when a large increase in unrestricted nonoperating revenues (\$9.7 million), related to the sale and lease back of the Hawai'i Loa campus, more than offset the operating deficit of \$2.6 million and resulted in an increase in net assets by \$8.8 million (or 10.9%) to \$89.8 million. For the 2019 fiscal year, however, the operating deficit of \$10.7 million contributed to a 12.2% reduction in net assets to \$71.7 million, of which \$27.1 million represents the balance of unrestricted endowment funds.

Materials reviewed by the team and interviews with senior administrators and members of the Board of Trustees indicate that the operating budget for the 2020 fiscal year has a budgeted deficit of \$3.9 million; but numerous factors (targeted hiring deferrals, temporary reductions in non-salary expenses, renegotiation of service contracts, and decreases in scholarship and graduate assistantship expenditures) are projected to reduce the budgeted deficit to \$1.7 million and to create a larger cushion to assure compliance with bond covenants. It was also indicated in interviews that variables around spring 2020 enrollment, and related net tuition revenue levels, remain as major risk factors in realizing a reduced deficit in the 2020 fiscal year. Significant declines in the market value of university investments due to financial market volatility were also viewed by senior administrators and trustees as a risk factor, but less likely to occur.

The team noted that compliance with bond covenants in the 2020 fiscal year and beyond is being carefully tracked by HPU and will be critical, as the university had negotiated with its bond holders a two-year (2018 and 2019 fiscal years) deferral of compliance with the debt service coverage ratio covenant; (the ratio cash flow available

to pay current debt obligations must be at least 1.1:1). This was a significant accomplishment, as HPU's operating results would not have complied with the debt service ratio covenant during the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years. Also significant was the negotiated deferral of the due date for a bond balloon maturity payment of \$32.5 million from the summer of 2020 to the summer of 2028 that was accomplished through a reissuance of HPU's 2015 bond issue in 2018.

The team also noted that HPU had \$74.2 million of bonds payable (2013 and 2018 bond issues) as of June 30, 2019, and that they are secured by the leasehold mortgage on certain long-term university property leases (primarily the Aloha Tower Marketplace campus), as well as by a pledge of gross university revenues (all tuition, auxiliary revenues, fees, and rents). In addition, a default on any of its bond covenants that is not cured within the required timeline could result in the acceleration of HPU's bond payments or the appointment of an external consultant to oversee the financial operations of the university.

Interviews with senior administrators and members of the Board of Trustees provided insights into the high level of attention that senior leadership have placed on compliance with the bond covenants. It was also clear from interviews with representatives of faculty, staff, and students that the university community has been informed of the need for continued compliance with the covenants. Finally, it was clear from the interviews that faculty and staff have been negatively impacted by ongoing salary freezes, deferred replacement of vacant positions, and reductions in non-salary expenses including professional development.

In addition to restructuring/reissuing its debt and focusing on its 2020 fiscal year budget to help assure debt covenant compliance, HPU has been pursuing several other

strategies to improve its financial stability. These strategies include efforts to achieve enrollment stabilization (described more fully in a later section of this report), improve facilities, realign the Oceanic Institute with the university, and boost fundraising support.

The facility enhancements aimed at improving student recruitment and retention that have been implemented or are being implemented include the three-phase centralization of the campus in downtown Honolulu, which has entailed the sale/lease back of the Hawai'i Loa campus; the relocation of operations from the Hawai'i Loa campus; and the lease of additional and more functional space in two downtown Honolulu locations (Pioneer Plaza and Waterfront Plaza) that are within a ten-minute walk of the campus hub at the Aloha Tower Marketplace (ATM). In addition, HPU recently (summer 2018) increased its student bed capacity at ATM from 270 beds to 370 beds and, in partnership with a major food service provider, established a permanent student dining facility at ATM. Other enhancements at ATM have included the creation of the first eSports facility on a university campus in Hawai'i and the establishment of a small student fitness center. Feedback from faculty, staff, and students regarding the facility moves and improvements was overwhelmingly positive. A greater sense of community was noted, as was increased visibility of the university within the community.

Efforts to achieve strategic realignment of the Oceanic Institute, which merged with HPU in 2014, have been undertaken to improve the Institute's financial performance to breakeven or better and to more effectively utilize its physical and programmatic resources to serve the students of the university. These efforts to date have included a refocusing of research and programming on revenue generating

activities in the areas of shrimp and finfish that has resulted in the award of three large technical service contracts. These efforts have also included a focus on marine science programming and use of Institute facilities for lab purposes, thus decreasing the number of costly lab facilities needed to be developed in downtown Honolulu, which is part of the last phase of the move of operations from the Hawai'i Loa campus.

In regard to efforts to boost fundraising support of HPU operations, team interviews with members of the senior administration and Board of trustees found very detailed plans for the 2020 fiscal year and beyond. The plans include strategies to prioritize increases in overall giving amounts, as well as in overall participation rates by various donor groupings and grantors. Plans also include priorities to expand engagement activities and services focused on alumni, as well as to increase event revenue, parking revenue, and lease revenue at ATM. Finally, and more significantly, plans include the pursuit of a \$25.0 million comprehensive campaign, currently in the "silent" phase, with six fundraising foci ranging from facility improvements to scholarship support to specialized accreditation for the business school and the engineering program.

In summary, HPU has undertaken a number of strategic efforts to improve its financial stability and long-term sustainability. These efforts, while yielding some positive early indicators, have not yet resulted in positive operating results, as evidenced by consecutive operating deficits beginning in the 2012 fiscal year and continuing through the 2019 fiscal year, with additional, although smaller, operating deficits projected to be incurred in the 2020 fiscal year through the 2022 fiscal year.

The team is very concerned that the trend of continuing operating deficits (cumulative total of \$43.7 million from fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2019) and the

resultant decrease in net assets, especially the unrestricted endowment portion of net assets, are endangering the financial stability and long-term sustainability of HPU; are placing the university in jeopardy of violating its bond covenants; and are negatively impacting HPU's ability to provide and support sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff (CFR 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4). These trends are also reflected in the September 2019 action by S&P Global Ratings to affirm a 'BB' rating (two rating levels below investment grade) on HPU's 2013 special purpose revenue bonds, with a revised outlook from stable to "negative." The rationale for the negative outlook given by S&P Global Ratings included the following: "The outlook revision reflects our opinion of the contingent liability risk associated with the series 2013 and 2018 bonds, which are subject to cross-default provision and certain debt covenants. In our view, there is limited cushion for meeting certain covenants, based on the year-to-date budget and projections."

As counterpoints to its concerns, the team noted feedback it received from Ernst & Young, a major international accounting firm with significant higher education experience. The feedback indicated that HPU's audit team from Ernst & Young had completed its own assessment of management plans and projections and, based on that assessment, is not planning to issue a "going concern" finding for the university as of June 30, 2019 (CFR 3.4).

The team also noted that HPU had \$27.1 million in unrestricted endowment funds as of June 30, 2019 that could be used to support deficit operations that are projected to occur through the 2022 fiscal year. These unrestricted endowment funds should be more than sufficient to cover the cumulative operating deficits of up to \$7.0

million that are projected to be incurred by the university through the 2022 fiscal year and to allow the university to remain in compliance with its bond covenants.

In addition, the team is very encouraged by the background, experience, and functioning of the new leadership group recently assembled by the president and by the support they are receiving by a very engaged Board of Trustees. Of particular note is the new vice president for advancement, who is already exceeding her fundraising goals, and by the new senior vice president and CFO, who came from outside higher education and has made great strides in beginning to restore stability and predictability into university finances (CFR 3.6, 3.8 and 3.9).

The team is also encouraged by the very recent and significant strategic consolidation of the HPU campus in downtown Honolulu that was funded by the sale of the Hawai'i Loa campus and accomplished on time and within budget. Team observations and interviews indicated that the consolidation, along with other facility improvements, is building a sense of community and identity for the university and is fostering coordination and collaboration among the faculty, staff, and students of the university's various colleges and divisions. It has also greatly enhanced HPU's visibility with the external community, which is significant given HPU's prominent location in downtown Honolulu (CFR 3.5 and 4.6).

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION THREE: COMMUNICATION**

*“That Hawaii Pacific develop systems and processes that will result in an organizational culture of timely, consistent, inclusive, and transparent communication engaging all stakeholders. (CFR 1.7, 3.7, 4.6)”*

HPU has made positive strides in improving communication at all levels of the institution since the team's visit in 2016. The president established a monthly "Talk Story" program for the campus community where he reports on important institutional issues, challenges, and accomplishments and answers questions that may be posed anonymously. An e-newsletter is distributed shortly thereafter to the community recapping what was discussed for those who were unable to attend. Additional e-newsletters are also distributed on a regular basis that share campus news, announcements, deadlines, calendars of events, and accomplishments of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and HPU supporters.

Expansion of shared governance committees and processes has also contributed to the sharing of information about institutional issues and how they are addressed. These committees and processes have also empowered staff and faculty to work across departmental lines to solve problems and resolve issues that used to get stuck in administrative silos that delayed or prevented actions from being taken.

The team found that the new leaders of HPU are earning the trust of faculty, staff, and students, as they are more transparent and open about how they are addressing the financial, personnel deployment and management, and student recruitment, enrollment, and retention challenges confronting the university. Administration and faculty leaders meet regularly to discuss issues and pending decisions that may have broad institutional impact. They do not always agree on the approaches being taken but they communicate more effectively than during the team's last visit.

## COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOUR: ENROLLMENT

*“Addressing the enrollment declines of the last several years may be the most urgent issue for the university to confront as it strives for financial viability....Working across organizational lines to collect timely, reliable, and consistent information, address student concerns, and improve process and programs that directly impact the education experience will all be essential in improving retention and graduate rates. (CFR 3.4)”*

According to enrollment trend data provided by HPU, total IPEDS headcount enrollment declined from 5,827 (4,835 undergraduate and 992 graduate) in fall 2014 to 4,086 (3,544 undergraduate and 542 graduate) in fall 2018; a 22.7% decline. Total IPEDS FTE enrollment also declined from 4,600 (3,809 undergraduate and 791 graduate) in fall 2014 to 3,263 (2,838 undergraduate and 425 graduate) in fall 2018; a 29.1% decline.

Trend data also indicate that the freshman acceptance rate increased from 62.6% in fall 2014 to 75.9% in fall 2018, while the freshman retention rate declined from 70% in fall 2014 to 58% in fall 2018. Six-year graduation rates, in turn, increased from 42% in fall 2014 to 47% in fall 2018, while having reached a high of 49% in fall 2015.

The most recent trend data show that total IPEDS headcount enrollment increased in fall 2019 to 4,170 (3,695 undergraduate and 475 graduate); a one-year increase of 2.1%. Total IPEDS FTE enrollment has yet to be calculated, but is expected to decline, as the fall 2019 enrollment mix has shifted to more part-time students.

The most recent trend data also show that the freshman acceptance rate increased to 76.7% in fall 2019, while the freshman retention rate held steady at 58% in fall 2019. The latest six-year graduation rates have yet to be calculated.

Finally, the most recent trend data show the freshman tuition discount rate increasing to an estimated 58.7% in fall 2019 from 54.9% in fall 2018 and 47% in fall 2017. The team noted that university's projections target a stabilized freshman discount rate of 55% in future years.

In contrast to declining and stabilizing retention rates at HPU, the WSCUC graduation rate dashboard shows very strong results. The overall average unit redemption rate for HPU is 89% compared to a WSCUC region rate of 83%. The overall average absolute graduation rate is 77% for HPU compared to the WSCUC region rate of 64%. In one of the team's interviews, Kristina Powers, a WSCUC Research Fellow who reviews all of the GRD rates for WSCUC and who is also a consultant for HPU, verified that the figures are accurate and reveal good results. She said these rates were a result of declining enrollment, which produces positive results for some institutions.

A review of HPU documents by the team and interviews with senior administrators and members of the Board of Trustees provided insights into these enrollment trends. For example, HPU experienced a 72-student or 14.9% increase in first-time, full-time undergraduate students in fall 2018 to a total of 554. Unfortunately, this trend did not continue into fall 2019, as first-time, full-time, undergraduate students totaled 479, which very closely matches the fall 2017 total of 482. This decline was attributed to decreased numbers of mainland and international students enrolling, which was somewhat offset by the more recent trend of increased numbers of local students enrolling.

Efforts completed and underway to stabilize and grow enrollment are rooted in HPU's Strategic Plan and are complementary of efforts to improve financial stability. Previously noted efforts to stabilize and grow enrollment include the phased

consolidation of the HPU campus in downtown Honolulu, the increased student use of the facilities and programs at the Oceanic Institute, the increase in student beds at ATM, and the creation of permanent student dining, eSports, and exercise facilities at ATM.

Additional efforts underway to stabilize and grow enrollment through recruitment and retention initiatives include:

1. refining and enhancing recruitment activities focused on improving the student experience through personalization and effective use of technology, including new customer relationship management (CRM) software,
2. optimizing need-based aid, including a commitment to meet 100% of unmet tuition need for local first-year students (“Holomua Commitment”) and the introduction of need-based aid for mainland students,
3. partnering with a national marketing firm to develop a new university brand, increase marketing efforts, and engage in a website redesign focused on student recruitment,
4. introducing four new graduate programs (doctorate in nursing practice, master’s in educational leadership, master’s in public administration, and master’s in public health) since the team’s last visit in 2016,
5. introducing three new baccalaureate-level engineering degree programs (electrical, biomedical, and biotechnology) and one new associate-level degree program (cyber security),
6. developing dual credit partnerships with six local public and private schools in Hawai’i to offer associate of arts in general studies degrees to high school students,
7. reconfiguring housing availability to prioritize incoming freshmen,

8. establishing new programs to attract higher academic quality students, including a residential honors program,
9. creating a student advising task force, enhanced gathering and use of data, and restructuring of the advising office to create a hybrid model of advising utilizing staff and faculty advisors, and
10. launching initiatives by various university offices focused on student retention including the president's office (2 initiatives), office of the dean of students (8 initiatives), and center for academic success (1 initiative).

Future retention initiatives being planned by HPU take advantage of its new designation of eligibility for federal Title III and Title IV grants and include the creation of a student success academy for provisionally enrolled students that would entail a summer bridge program; a first-year student success experience; and a second-year student success experience. Also planned is a "live well" initiative focused on student health and wellness.

Future enrollment-related initiatives include a new tuition discount program focused on prospective undergraduate students from California, the creation of a new hybrid degree completion option for undergraduate students, and the revamp of undergraduate preview day. In addition, an increase in the number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs offered on military bases is being reviewed and several workforce development initiatives are being implemented that focus on local businesses and organizations. Finally, HPU is pursuing creative partnerships with other educational entities, with initial exploration of a partnership with Arizona State University.

In summary, the university has numerous initiatives underway and plans to stabilize and, according to strategic plan goals, grow overall enrollment, with less dependence on undergraduate students over time. There are early indications that these initiatives are having some positive results but have yet to impact in a significant way the overall enrollment of HPU. It will therefore be challenging for HPU to reach its strategic plan goal of incrementally growing its total headcount enrollment to 6,000 by 2027.

### COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FIVE: PLANNING

*That campus leaders:*

- *develop “a new comprehensive strategic planning process,”*
- *create a set of university, college, and support area strategic plans “all in alignment with each other and with the overall Strategic Plan,”*
- *establish “measurable goals that are publicly reported to the university community,” and*
- *clarify the “role of the newly established Shared Governance Strategic Planning Oversight Committee.”*

The university has made great strides in responding to all of these requests. A comprehensive—and, according to the president, a very inclusive—strategic planning process was developed and led to a Strategic Plan for 2017 – 2027 entitled **Shaping a Future of Innovation, Excellence, and Engagement**. Additionally, all of the university’s colleges and administrative divisions created their own individual strategic plans. The university engaged in significant processes focused on academic planning, financial planning, enrollment planning, recruitment and marketing planning, and development and advancement planning. Action plans were put into place and goals

established. The Shared Governance Strategic Planning Oversight Committee was charged to review and comment on all developed plans and to request clarifications and resubmissions if necessary. The president has been reporting to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis, giving the Board status reports on progress in eight areas: academics, finances, enrollment, student life, campus master plan, communications, administration, and advancement.

The visiting team held numerous discussions regarding planning. Its findings were mixed. It is the case, as evidenced above, that much planning is occurring and that the plans are helping the institution move forward. Nevertheless, a number of problems were noted. The overall Strategic Plan is basically a list of laudable objectives, with no plans of action or measures of success. And, as a ten-year plan, it is of necessity, written in broad brush-strokes—perhaps more of a strategic vision than a strategic plan.

To be fair, the university's explicit intention is that the various university, college, and division "subsidiary" plans would be the ones providing the plans of action and measures of success. And that, for the most part, has been the case. However, a number of these subsidiary plans are themselves works in progress, with actions to be defined and metrics to be determined. In many cases, the assessable "SMART" goals are not there; or, if they are there, they are so vague as to not be meaningful. Furthermore, a number of the plans appear to have been developed with scant [or at least inexplicit] attention and relationship to either the overall Strategic Plan or to other institutional plans. Issues of alignment remain paramount in ensuring that all pieces of the university planning puzzle are coming together in the desired fashion to move the institution forward appropriately and effectively.

The problems referred to above are evident in regard to the institution's Academic Plan. Though one has been developed, there is little evidence in it of the university's plans and priorities for new program development; of extant program restructuring; of how new program priorities and restructuring correlate with the enrollment plan; or of how the program priorities and enrollment plans correlate with the institution's seven-year full-time faculty staffing plan. Meetings with the deans surfaced numerous new program plans for the next five-seven years; but these have not yet been prioritized or found their way into the Academic Plan. Thus, questions of alignment and of how a specific new program relates to the university's overall Strategic Plan appear here as well.

On the plus side, the academic deans appear to be working together collegially on new program development. The focus appears to be more than ever on developing interdisciplinary programs that cut across college lines. There appears to be a common attitude that, especially in times of challenge, it is important, as one dean said it best, "not to build a taller wall but a longer table."

The lack of a new, permanent provost certainly hampered coordinated academic planning efforts. But with a permanent provost now on board, such coordinated planning should proceed well. Additionally, the new provost has decided to personally take over the chair of the Shared Governance Strategic Planning Oversight Committee; to resurrect and reenergize that committee; to begin once again having the committee review all of the various strategic plans and their implementation progress; to ensure that all annual plans are updated, with specific metrics of success included; and to give the committee a true oversight function in the planning and implementation process.

Additionally, this committee, with the provost, should be able have the university provide a dedicated site where all strategic plans will live [and be updated as living documents], and to give regular public updates on strategic plan implementation and success, something which has not systematically occurred. Furthermore, with the recent hiring of a new, full-time director of institutional research committed to establishing a data governance system providing consistent data to all university constituencies, it should be possible for metrics to be easily tracked longitudinally.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION SIX: ADVISING**

*“That a high priority be placed on making special efforts to improve training programs for advisors and related student support personnel, with the goal of establishing a first-rate advising program that meets students’ needs. (CFR 2.13)”*

In 2016, the WSCUC visiting team noted dissatisfaction among students and faculty with HPU’s academic advising system and its ability to meet the needs of students. (CFR 2.12) Advisers in the Advising Office tended to work in isolation from the academic programs and learning support services were not well coordinated. (CFR 2.13) On her arrival in June 2018, the then interim provost established a Student Advising Task Force (SATF) which met weekly beginning in August 2018. The SATF charge was to address the advising issues in the July 11, 2016 WSCUC team recommendations. Once formed, SATF developed an inclusive and deliberate approach to gathering evidence on how to improve the current process. SATF moved quickly to examine comprehensively HPU’s academic advising system—including that occurring in the Advising Office, academic departments, and student academic support services. It gathered information from students and faculty through surveys and focus groups and studied advising models currently implemented at other academic institutions.

Based on these results and on conversations among the Admissions Office, the Registrar's Office, and student learning support services, SATF produced a report at the end of October 2018.

As a result of SATF's recommendations, HPU restructured student advising, moving from a total reliance on staff advisers in the Advising Office to a model which would also directly involve advisers in academic departments. In general, the shared advising model means that staff advisers meet with incoming students and that, once the student declares a major—or sometimes earlier—a faculty adviser is assigned. Training has been provided to both staff and faculty academic advisers, and a software system (Banner) is being used to maintain a record of student visits and actions. The Advising Office is now co-located with other student learning support services provided by HPU in order to better coordinate intervention when students would benefit from tutorial or other support services. (CFR 2.13) Additionally, the university has renewed an emphasis on the "early alert" system for students experiencing academic difficulty; and faculty are sharing responsibility in this advising effort to increase student success and retention.

In summary, once advising became a higher HPU priority in 2018, the university quickly acted on the WSCUC Commission's recommendation, restructuring its academic advising to include direct involvement of faculty. Many faculty recognize that student advising is a part of their teaching responsibility and that it provides a better way to monitor and guide students through their major requirements to degree completion. As HPU's financial constraints force more stringent scheduling of low-enrolled classes, faculty will become even more critical to ensuring that students complete their degrees successfully and on time. While the adviser workshops in the

summer of 2019 were a good first step, some faculty noted a need for more training, particularly in the effective use of Banner software.

HPU and the visiting team recognize that effective student advising is critical to student retention and success. (CFR 2.12) Because the shared staff-faculty advising model is being implemented for the first time in 2019, it will be important for the Shared Governance Student Success Oversight Committee and related committees to monitor evidence of effective advising based on improved student retention, graduation rates, and student and faculty satisfaction with academic outcomes.

### **TEAM COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given all that has been said above, the visiting team confirms that HPU has significant and serious financial challenges that threaten its viability. Its own commendations and recommendations are made in that context while keeping in mind the six recommendations made by the Senior Commission after the last visit.

The team commends HPU for the following:

1. The Board of Trustees is well informed and actively engaged in the issues facing the institution and is providing appropriate strategic planning and fiduciary oversight and support of institutional leadership.
2. The Board of Trustees, senior leaders, deans, faculty, and staff are all playing important roles in deploying multiple strategies to retain more students, which will lead to better educational outcomes and improve the institution's financial position.
3. The senior leadership team is now in place, focused, collaborative, and working well together under the president's leadership.

4. The president is fostering a more open leadership style and has put into place a set of communication strategies to keep the university community informed of issues, goals, challenges, and accomplishments.
5. The faculty and staff are committed to the institution and are actively involved in shared governance.
6. Implementation of the physical plant master plan to expand the institution's presence in downtown Honolulu was accomplished on a timely basis and within budget.
7. The university restructured its debt to achieve temporary bond covenant relief and deferral of a balloon maturity payment.
8. The Oceanic Institute's focus and programs have been modified to better integrate with HPU's mission and strategic goals.
9. The advising system, while new, involves more direct faculty participation in concert with staff advisors, shows promise, and should strengthen student success and improve student retention.

The team recommends the following to HPU:

1. To ensure financial stability and sustainability, the university should:
  - Remain focused on short-term efforts to stabilize enrollment and related net student revenue as quickly as possible (CFR 3.4).

- Advance implementation of the comprehensive campaign with an initial focus on goals that support its short-term financial viability (CFR 3.4).
  - Implement necessary contingencies in order to remain in compliance with bond covenants without jeopardizing necessary faculty and staff levels and academic quality (CFR 2.1, 3.1).
2. To ensure well-coordinated strategic planning, the administration, building on what has begun, should more clearly:
    - Articulate alignment of the overall HPU strategic plan with the more specific implementation plans developed by each university division, college, and support area.
    - Prioritize action plans tied to well defined planning objectives, timelines, and metrics which include key performance indicators.
    - Monitor progress comprehensively in order to achieve expected outcomes and performance (CFR 4.6).
  3. The university should prioritize the number of recent initiatives in order to focus on those of greatest importance in light of limited financial resources and a reduced number of personnel. The team is concerned that, in responding to WASC Commission recommendations, HPU may have developed more new initiatives than can be efficiently implemented (CFR 4.6)
  4. The university should continue efforts to improve the accurateness and utilization of centralized institutional research data to foster an institution committed to quality assurance, institutional learning, and improvement (CFR 4.1, 4.3.)