MEMORANDUM

TO: Mānoa Faculty

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Classrooms

Faculty getting access to classrooms to teach courses when they want to teach them has long been a problem on the Mānoa campus. This shortage of classrooms has also been a factor in the difficulties students have had getting into the courses they need to take for graduation. As many as 200 classes have had to have their times moved in recent semesters because of the shortage of general purpose classrooms that the University Scheduler has access to. About 40% of the classrooms on campus are specialized classrooms that have always been under departmental control. However, only about half of the remaining general purpose classrooms are ones the University Scheduler can schedule. The rest are departmentally-controlled, and until recently there wasn’t even an accurate list of which spaces fell into this category.

In Fall 2009, OVCAA proposed a new Classroom Policy with the core central concept that departmentally-controlled general purpose classrooms would become centrally controlled, with the proviso that scheduling priority for the department would be retained for classrooms that had historically been departmentally controlled. In Spring 2011, the Mānoa Faculty Senate (MFS) passed a motion on classroom policy which endorsed this central concept with some caveats. Since we had always made it clear in our discussions that there would be a complex and gradual process of implementation, governed by a committee with faculty, staff, and administrative representatives, we took the MFS motion as an endorsement of our policy with the caveats applying to implementation and published it in Fall 2011 after some minor revisions. It turns out that this was a misunderstanding, since MFS envisioned its motion as pointing to a policy different in some respects, though one that has not been put in writing beyond the report MFS passed in the Spring.

In the meantime, we did form the implementation committee (co-chaired by Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Krystyna Aune and Campus Planner Mark Gilbert, and with Faculty Senate representation), and it turns out – as is usually the case – that an examination of practical realities has pushed us into a somewhat different path than either OVCAA or MFS envisioned. I therefore want to state clearly that we are moving to implement neither the policy posted by OVCAA nor the report of MFS exactly as drafted. But we are making some changes in how classrooms are handled at Mānoa. The purpose of this memorandum is to announce several steps which constitute Phase 1 of these
changes: these have been proposed by the implementation committee and have been accepted by OVCAA and the Senate Executive Committee of MFS.

First, the Campus Planning office has been actively updating and verifying a data base of spaces on campus and posted on the web (see the following URL: http://manoa.hawaii.edu/planning/Space_planning/space.html). This database contains a full list of 501 instructional spaces on campus divided into various categories. The most fundamental distinction is between the 288 general-purpose classrooms (coded as 110) and the 213 specialized classrooms (coded as 210). We understand that a chemistry lab is not a dance floor which is not a gamelan, and we shouldn’t be trying to schedule seminars in any of those spaces, all of which remain under departmental control. Spaces coded as 110 have traditionally been divided into two categories, but on our website we have actually subdivided them into four categories. There is a very small number of departmentally-controlled classrooms (five, in fact) which the committee recommends we continue to treat as departmentally-controlled space without any broader access because they really aren’t conceivably useful as general-purpose classrooms. However, the committee considers that most of the departmentally-controlled classrooms could potentially be used by other instructional units on campus so they are proposing that these 117 rooms be potentially schedulable by the Scheduler in addition to the department or unit that currently controls them. There are also a few centrally-controlled classrooms which don’t really make sense as general purpose classrooms – mostly because of their location – so we propose to move these three rooms to departmentally-controlled status, although for the most part, the list of centrally controlled general purpose classrooms (164) remains intact.

Every department should examine this list and make sure they agree with our categorization. If they do not, the chair should contact Mark Gilbert, the Campus Planner (markdgil@hawaii.edu), by no later than December 1, 2011, with a request that the classroom be reclassified. After December 1, if we have not heard from anyone, we will assume that the lists have been verified and are accurate.

Second, what we propose to do with those lists – at least initially – is somewhat different from either policy proposal from OVCAA and MFS. Rather than those classrooms being moved from departmental control to central control, the committee proposes that for now we don’t change the locus of control but that any classroom on that list is one that the Scheduler can request access to as she puts together the schedule. We want to see if this smaller step will give us the classrooms the faculty and students need. So in addition to departmentally-controlled rooms (both 110 and 210 codes) and centrally-controlled rooms (all 110 codes) that we have now, at the end of the verification process there will be a large middle category of 110 classrooms which remain departmentally controlled but are potentially accessible by the Scheduler for other classes. So at the present time, no department will lose control over any room it currently controls.
Third, we are announcing a key change in how departments and the University Scheduler interact. In the past, departments requested space, and if the Scheduler could not accommodate them, they then used space under their own control to meet their own needs. We will now know for the first time exactly what spaces are under departmental control, so we will expect schedules coming from departments to utilize their own classrooms first. There will obviously be a give and take here just as there is now, but instructional units with their own space will be expected to use that space first before attempting to draw upon the common pool of space that the Scheduler controls access to.

These are the policy changes or first implementation steps that we would like to announce at this time. Since the Spring 2012 schedule is already being built, no one will see many changes in procedures for that schedule, and indeed our increase in enrollment is putting increased pressure on classroom utilization for the Spring. But we expect the Fall 2012 schedule to be built in accordance with these changes, and we will be looking to see what difference these make in classroom availability.

A number of concrete tasks face us, among them implementing changes in how the schedule is built and identifying which of the many general purpose classrooms could really make a difference as the Scheduler obtains access to them. MFS expressed real concern about departmental access to classrooms for meetings, but it turns out that there is a special code for conference rooms, of which we have nearly 200 on campus, and figuring out how conference rooms and computer labs are part of this picture will take more study and analysis. A number of the renovation projects currently underway on campus will create additional high-quality instructional spaces, including in Edmondson, Hartley, and Sakamaki. If general purpose, these will be centrally controlled, although Edmondson in particular will contain new instructional labs for basic science courses, which are a major need on campus and will help us respond to one of the most urgent enrollment pressure points on campus. Finally, and perhaps most disturbingly, there are a number of spaces on campus that could be used for instruction which are currently vacant and in some cases are being used to store objects of no discernable value. We are attempting to identify all such spaces and to develop plans to turn them into useful spaces.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

c:  Chancellor Hinshaw
    Vice Chancellor Cutshaw
    Vice Chancellor Hernandez
    Vice Chancellor Ostrander
    Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Aune
    Mānoa Deans and Directors
    Campus Planner Gilbert
    SEC Chair Cooney
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