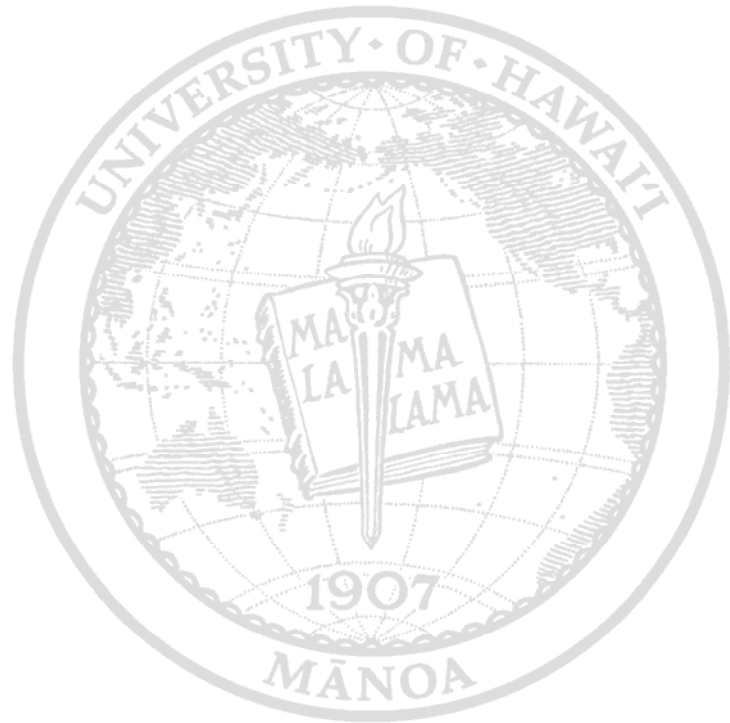


**Doing Excellent Research
at UHM**



**Researchers' Reflections on State
of the Research Enterprise**

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Executive Summary and Policy Recommendations

This project explores the state of the research enterprise on the University of Hawaii at Manoa using focus group data from highly productive, mid-career researchers.

The faculty whose reflections serve as the basis for this report were drawn from all parts of campus; there were fourteen different colleges and professional schools represented in the four focus groups conducted. The average length of time on campus was 11.9 years, with some only here for two years while others had been here two decades.

The faculty were asked in advance to think about two questions:

What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as nourishing and supporting you?

What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as having negative qualities or interfering with your work?

Most obviously, many highly productive researchers relish the easy access that Hawaii provides to the marine environment, the volcanoes, the cosmos, and the ecological diversity found in Hawaii. Others deeply appreciate the propinquity between Hawaii and the Pacific and Asian countries. Finally, faculty value the diversity of Hawaii, the campus, and the faculty, and the interdisciplinary spirit it fosters on the campus.

Hawaii clearly presents researchers with “unparalleled” access to a unique physical environment in ways that have long been understood and these continue to be important in fostering excellent research on the campus. The location of Hawaii at the center of the Pacific, makes the countries in the Asia and the Pacific basin far more accessible. Moreover, that physical richness is accompanied by an ethnic diversity (both in the community and on the campus) that provides researchers here with a unique and futuristic population for cutting edge social research. Finally, Hawaii’s unique place, nationally, as the center for indigenous scholarship is coming into its own with the creation of Hawai’i nui ākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge. These attributes of the campus tended to draw like minded scholars which also made UHM a destination of choice for certain researchers.

While many aspects that supported excellent research at UH Manoa were external to the University itself, there were internal aspects of the campus that researchers felt were working well. Here faculty first noted the

value of graduate education, and graduate students, to the intellectual life of departments. Another key theme identified by these scholars was the crucial role played by reasonable workload and supportive chairs in research productivity. While largely unrecognized sources of excellence and nurturance, they are critical to faculty productivity according to our respondents. Also appreciated were funds to support travel to conferences, an accessible, responsive, and thorough IRB process, and a library staff that is “phenomenal.”

Asked what factors detract from the research enterprise on the campus, the comments were passionate and pointed. One person said, “Where do you begin?” Obviously, these comments suggest that there is certainly room for improvement in the conduct of research on the UHM campus. Complaints and concerns address, notably, the absence of tangible supports to high research productivity: these include viable GA stipends, sensible and easy to use travel software (and policies), grant writing assistance, fiscal policies (and personnel) that are researcher friendly, facilities that support good research, and elimination of make work bureaucratic activities (which detract from research).

More generally, the clear message to all who read this is that, at least from the faculty perspective, there is an absence of appreciation for the research enterprise, and excellent scholarship more generally, so the institution is perceived as slow to change those long-standing problems that impede such work. Beyond this, researchers long for institutional leadership that understands the need to “think big ideas” and create stimulating, cross disciplinary spaces where researchers can meet across traditional academic divides to celebrate each other’s work and accomplishments.

Action implications from this research range of the concrete (and arguably doable) to the daunting. First, it is vital that we not change what is currently working for highly productive researchers. If anything, these features of the campus should be commended for doing good work. As for those things in need of change, some involve relatively easy fixes, and some will take more work. Certainly, campus leadership recognizes that facilities need to be regularly maintained and even in the current budget climate, there is a priority on such activities. This is commendable. In need of more work are fiscal policies, notably the travel bureaucracy but also those fiscal policies and practices around grant management. Fiscal “climate” for lack of a better word needs to be re-thought with less of an eye towards “policing” of faculty. Again, there is some movement in the area of grant management, but more clearly needs to be done. We also need to follow up on the travel policies and practices given how vital that work is to keeping the research enterprise viable and networked. Finally, there needs to be thought given to creating spaces and places to both “think great thoughts” and nourish the intellectual

life of the campus and the research community. Certainly, activities like the Manoa Fund and the Faculty Lecture Series are modest steps down that road, but more needs to be done.

Study Background and Methodology

This project explores the state of the research enterprise on the University of Hawaii at Manoa using focus group data from highly productive, mid-career researchers. The study was initiated by the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education with the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Faculty Mentoring Program in order to determine both what is working and what can be improved in the research enterprise on our campus. The project is entitled **Doing Excellent Research at UHM**.

The most obvious markers of research's essential interdependence and collaborative nature are the acknowledgements, footnotes, and bibliographical citations that delineate the intellectual communities to which the work belongs; the co-authoring and collaborative investigations; and the conferences and workshops at which scholars gather to share and critique each other's work. In a most meaningful way, the craftsmanship evident and explicit in the research in which each discipline engages is stunning evidence of the interdependence of the scholarly community at UH-Manoa.

To develop a complete appreciation of the successes and challenges of doing research on our campus, this report summarizes data drawn from a series of focus groups with faculty who were nominated by others, generally college level administrators, as being "mid-career scholars who show great promise as researchers among your faculty." The study's investigators sought to construct diverse groups of Manoa faculty to participate in a series of facilitated discussion of how research at our campus is conducted, as well as challenges that face highly productive faculty on our campus.

Letters of invitation to participate in the focus groups were sent to 65 researchers in late 2008 (see Appendix 1). Eventually, 22 researchers participated in the series of four focus groups held in late January and early February 2009. The faculty whose reflections serve as the basis for this report were drawn from all parts of campus; there were fourteen different colleges

and professional schools represented. The average length of time on campus was 11.9 years, with some only here for two years while others had been here two decades. The researchers were largely Caucasian (63%), Asian (18%) or Native Hawaiian (14%). Sixty four percent of the focus group participants were female, and the average age of the group was 48.5 years.

The faculty who were available participated in a facilitated discussion of how research at our campus is conducted, by sharing their experiences with research at a one-hour focus group session. Respondents were told that these discussions are meant to provide the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education with faculty views of the state of the research enterprise on our campus. The study methodology and materials, including an informed consent sheet (see Appendix 2) were distributed to all participants and the study was approved by the campus institutional review board. The focus groups were videotaped in order to facilitate transcriptions of the four one hour sessions. After that transcription process is fully complete and verified, the video records of the meetings will be eliminated. Faculty who participated in the groups were only asked to complete some general demographic information on themselves. Those faculty who participated in the sessions were asked the following two questions:

What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as nourishing and supporting you?

What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as having negative qualities or interfering with your work?

What follows is a summary of faculty comments which both document the vitality of research on our campus as well as to improve and enrich the research process by streamlining support services and identifying problems.

Findings:

What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as nourishing and supporting you?

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***“We have unparalleled access to the environment”***

Physical Location and Character of the Islands

Most of the comments that were made in response to questions of what nourished and supported researchers at UHM revolved, understandably around the rich and unique physical location and character of the islands, but there were some surprises here as well.

**Location, location, location:** Most obviously, many highly productive researchers relish the easy access that Hawaii provides to the marine environment, the volcanoes, the cosmos, and the ecological diversity found in Hawaii. Others relish the propinquity between Hawaii and the Pacific and Asian countries that comprise their research focus. Finally, faculty relish the diversity of Hawaii, the campus, and the faculty, and the interdisciplinary spirit it fosters on the campus.

Starting first with the physical environment, researchers from many fields are drawn to the marine environment (along with easy and close access to same), as well as the geographic diversity of the islands. Take these quotes as representative of that feature of research opportunities here:

***“We have unparalleled access to the environment - the natural environment. As someone who works on coral reef invertebrates...the environment and the colleagues, are really what drove me to UH in the first place.”***

***“Being a biologist, this is an interesting place for someone who is interested in evolution”***

***“Location is very important for me...I work on marine animals...I do have particular opportunities to work with certain local species, and we have running sea water ...”***

And while it would appear that the enthusiasm is simply limited to the physical aspects of Hawaii for certain types of researchers, there is a social aspect to this as well. Take these comments that focus on the fact that this physical richness also produces a richer social network of likeminded researchers in particular specialties. Note, too, that the specializations that showcase this aspect of the campus have now expanded to encompass UH

Manoa's focus on the Pacific and Asia, as well as Indigenous studies, particularly Native Hawaiian research and scholarship.

***“I can easily link it to other people and if I didn't need that, then it's not quite as compelling to work here.”***

***“Other places I applied, I would be perhaps the only East Asian specialist in the entire place...who does Chinese history for...[the] thousand years before the period I study, so the access to lots of colleagues all over the university who do some of the things that I do. And as department chair I had a very easy time recruiting when I'm hiring an Asianist.”***

***“That's our whole objective there [Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge}, to serve the Nation.”***

Beyond the advantage drawn from Hawaii's location vis a vis Asia and the Pacific and the particular advantage conveyed by our host culture, there is also the rich ethnic diversity of the community which conveys advantage to those seeking to do research on particular ethnicities.

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“The diversity that Hawaii offers, and the disparities that we have, or inequities in health and access and diseases really [are] an attraction for [those in] nursing.”

The Social Diversity of Hawaii as a Research Resource

Hawaii has long been noted for its ethnic diversity, which could be dubbed as “futuristic” since there is no clear majority ethnic group, there have long been high rates of ethnic out marriage, and the ethnic groups represented are of growing importance both in the United States and elsewhere in the world. The ethnic diversity of the community is also found in the campus student body, which both researchers and scholars also highlighted as a plus. Finally, all this diversity is found in a relatively small, livable community, where the walls of “town and gown” are more easily bridged, particularly by researchers who have learned from the errors of the past.

“It's never easy to get funding, but I think it's less competitive to get funding here

because we have access to the population, we have access to the student body or student bodies that many people don't so I think just the rich culture of diversity is a very large draw for a lot of our faculty”.

“I can remember twenty years ago when community based organizations would not allow the university to get the kind of support and assistance with their research because they always felt that people here would use the

research to further their own ends, get the publication, get their PhD, and never come back to the community, and I think that the tenor of that has really changed...sense of place is not just university separate from community...sense of place is that there is some kind of continuous linkage, and I think we have a really important responsibility to make sure that we respond to what the community wants and we don't indeed sit in our ivory towers."

"I think for me doing research on Japan and Japanese Americans in Hawaii, the environment here, and being surrounded by knowledgeable people, knowledgeable colleagues, colleagues who might be interested in these topics, is kind of the fertile ground that helps me to develop topics. And I think that's really important. When they come within a sort of thriving context, the intellectual as well as the cultural context as kind of relying upon colleagues as well. So really the kind of collegiality is really important for me."

Some faculty clearly value the diversity of the community and the student body as a direct asset for their research, but others find a more general appeal to the diversity of the campus, the community, and faculty. Take these comments from two physical scientists:

"I came because of the diversity in the colleagues and the diversity of the student population though that's not necessarily an advantage for the research. I applied for an instructional position, and I like a multicultural environment; I like to have colleagues around me who have other ideas than I have."

"We have a diverse grad faculty that is really strong because there's a lot of overlap of interests and fields which makes it really strong."

Finally, there are faculty who report that the campus, perhaps because of its ethnic and social diversity, is a fertile ground for collaboration across traditional disciplines that welcomes and supports interdisciplinary work:

"I think the thing that's been great for me is just being able to connect with other people across disciplines...I've been able to link up with Women's Studies, and I also have a writing group of other department professors who are at my same level, we get together every week and share each other's research and writing and give each other ideas. That's been just phenomenal. You know to a certain degree that's been encouraged... interdisciplinary, that's just been a life line for me."

"For me it's also the context and the environment but it's more like the environment in my own department, because there is such a linguistic diversity everywhere in the states nowadays that I think it would work

anywhere...even though Hawaii is so special with Hawaiian, Pigeon, Creole, and all the different Asian languages. But it's the immediate context of my department, having colleagues who work in the same area in my discipline, it's sort of an untraditional discipline so for many other universities it's housed inside a language department or a linguistics department or a school of education...but here it is its own department."

While many of the positive aspects of the campus that supported the research enterprise were largely external to the campus, that was not universally the case. There were a number of positive comments about the campus that reflect aspects of the research enterprise that are working well.

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***"I can't say enough about our IRB here."***

UHM Policies and Practices that Enhance the Research Enterprise

***"...the PhD students, not because they're teaching, but because they make you do the research. In essence, they are constantly pushing you to be creative."***

Faculty were quick to mention the crucial role that graduate students play in the generation of new knowledge. There are some challenges here as well, that we will note in the following section, but the faculty were quick to identify that as a plus for the campus.

Related to value of graduate education to the intellectual life of the department is the faculty recognition of the importance of reasonable workload and supportive chairs in research productivity. Chairs, who in most departments determine workload, also provide other aspects of crucial support for faculty (like mentoring, letters of support for grants, and institutional problem solving). These features of campus life are largely unrecognized sources of excellence and nurturance, but critical to faculty productivity.

***"Maybe I shouldn't say this, it may produce some conflict, but we're essentially if we're active in research on a 2-2 teaching load, which is reasonable for a research one Ph.D. granting department."***

***"For me the 2-2 definitely is a must. I could not do my research if I were teaching more than 2-2. I simply couldn't."***

***"I have one more for the positive side: [department] chairs. When you have their support it's really invaluable...I think we sometimes take it for granted writing letters for us. But I must say, it's not a generic letter. It's every time one that really does mention the things that you have in your***

***application and I don't think I could have received all the extra moneys we got without the chairs.***

Many faculty were keen to support the value of internal policies practices and offices that help support their research. Generally, the first of these to be identified were the URC travel funds.

***"funding for us to go to conferences once a year is critical for all of us and not just our new faculty..."***

Also appreciated were funds to bring in outside speakers. Take this comment:

***"A lot of experts who come out here...just think of the people in journalism we've had that [any of] the best schools would be lucky to have. It's not unusual to have [a] Helen Thomas...and the students are interviewing her for their research."***

Faculty who did have access to offices that helped them prepare competitive national grants were extremely effusive in the praise of such offices and those units that helped researchers frame their projects in culturally sensitive and ethical ways. Those who had recently lost such support also spoke forcefully for the importance of such infrastructure supports:

***"So the staff that we have in my unit, because it's a research heavy unit they're familiar with grant applications, so there is infrastructure support...expertise and infrastructure of the support staff is huge for me."***

***"You move from around the country to Hawaii [where] a lot of research, especially in the culture of the state, depends upon relationships and connections. So to have an office, somebody who knows those people, who can make connections to you, to be able to be culturally appropriate and respectful so that people want to partner with you, then you partner in a way that is ethical. To have that resource in your school is absolutely essential, just because it's the right thing, the right way to do research, but it also promotes the university to the community for research in a way that's respectful and makes it much more correct."***

***"I can't say enough about our IRB here."***

***“the kind of support I get, my colleagues and I receive, from the library is phenomenal. And they’re doing it with very little funding”.***

Two other entities came in for high praise from the faculty, the institutional review board and the library. Some also appreciated the flexibility that the OVRGE displayed regarding overhead,<sup>1</sup> as well as recent efforts to reach out to the humanities. Here’s a sampling of the sentiments here:

***“I want to comply and be ethical and I can’t say enough about our IRB here. They came to our school to actually meet with the faculty, to clarify issues. This is completely open and facilitative.”***

***“I think we’re very lucky for the library and the librarians and the people who work there. [There is] much work that I couldn’t have done that is critical without the help of the librarians...buying things even though there is no budget. It’s all the tricks that they apply just to get this book. I mean if it’s a series, there’s no money [so they will] buy one book and then another book, and by chance from the same series...I appreciate it tremendously.***

***“I thought of three things, the first one was the same as [person above], we’re both in Humanities and for us, the library is our laboratory”***

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<sup>1</sup> “Actually I would mention one other positive for Humanities at least is Gary Ostrander. He’s much more sensitive to Humanities and has diverted money our way or at least made an effort to go that direction and that’s why we don’t want to see him move out of that position, because he seemed to understand the nature of Humanities funding and to try and help us out” That said, there were also participants who took the VCRGE to task for proposing to close an institute: “It’s not good when the international press of the *Nature* and *Science* report the closure of the Kewalo Marine Laboratory that’s been the main attraction, attractive point of the biological sciences.”

*What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as having negative qualities or interfering with your work?*

***“I was talking to several of my colleagues after I got the invitation. The general thing that most people said was ‘where do you start?’”***

Many faculty opened this section by expressing appreciation that their concerns would have an audience. Groups thanked us for listening and valuing their perspectives and experiences. That said, most researchers feel that administrators and others on campus do not know what they do and are not curious about what they do. They felt that administrators, writ large, needed to listen more; they also feel an urgent need to deal with the “Byzantine bureaucracy” they encounter when they seek grants. Finally, they seek help dealing with a “culture of can’t” among the staff they deal with on fiscal and other matters, and they were distressed by what appears to be an assumption that faculty will misuse resources if not heavily policed. Another theme that will be developed here is that even those things which support research (e.g. graduate students, grant writing support, travel, grant writing, and workload) can be said to have a “flip side” where problems arise. Let’s take the most modest of these challenges first, and then move to more global problems.

Graduate Student Recruitment and Remuneration

***“Can we talk about TA stipends?”***

***Biological science’s TA stipends are not competitive with the mainland”***

***“There are numerous cases where I’ve had the grant money to make a competitive offer and I’ve been told we will not change the stipend on a GA.***

***I want to attract that student, I will pay for it.***

***No. The student’s in Stanford.”***

***“Graduate student recruitment.***

***That’s probably one of my biggest complaint about being in Hawaii.”***

Researchers, particularly those from the physical and biological sciences, noted that our GA salaries/stipends are not competitive with those being offered by mainland campuses. An additional problem surfaces when the graduate students are from foreign countries. Here, at least one researcher passionately reported on problems with the handling of vital immigration forms that resulted in one graduate assistant being deported with no warning.

Another concern that surfaced among researchers was gender inequality on the campus, and its impact on research productivity. Since this observation lines up with recent research on the continuing problems of women in higher education, it should come as no surprise that it surfaced in this inquiry.

Gender Bias

***“One thing that has made my research difficult is the heavy male orientation presence. Every person in a chair or dean position that I know is a male, most full professors are male ...that makes research or excellence in research by females [difficult].”***

While the library came in for many kudos among our respondents, there were also those who expressed frustration. Two major themes stand out here; first that the sciences (both social and hard) require access to a broad range of electronic resources:

Library Problems

***“Well I guess the library is worth talking about because of the crucial institutional support it can supply at least in the life sciences; access to electronic resources these days are fundamental. We all need electronic access to a wide swath of journals, and to go in and find that something’s missing or are not there, it definitely slows things down. I mean sure there’s inter-library loan and all these things but...there are too many things to be doing than to have to track down or wait a week for a paper, that’s not really acceptable.”***

***“If it’s not available, it’s just not available. And in fact, it’s proven easier to phone call a colleague at the University of California and ask them to email it to me.”***

***“I second that because a lot of times you’ll go on for the medical journals and they’ll say it’s at JABSOM. And you can’t get it electronically but you drive to Kaka`ako to get an article. And there’s no other option...”***

For other researchers, particularly those in the arts and humanities, it is the fear that the library is not fully understood by administrators.

***“There has been a growing consensus...among administrators [that] books are obsolete for all fields, which, by the way, is not true.***

***... Humanities faculty are routinely asked to come up with***

**\$2K - \$5K to publish a book.  
And when the average salary is \$65K, (laughing),  
that's a lot of money for us.  
So, they were feeding into a sort of downward cycle where,  
because we perceive books to be out of date, we're accelerating that  
process,  
but that's still what our expectations are for tenured promotion,  
that we produce the books.  
But we also need them to do our research  
and we also use the electronic stuff and need it, but we need books  
too.  
They were calling it a museum, the "book museum..."**

#### Faculty Retention and Spousal Hires

Faculty retention and workload also came in for their fair share of discussion, as this exchange below indicates:

**"The simplest one that comes to mind, the mentality is that in order  
to retain faculty they have to go get a job offer.  
Let's think about that. Let's think about the logic behind that.  
That's acceptable if someone wants to go look for a job,  
but maybe there are faculty that you don't need to have go search.  
Because the minute they do, there's the potential that they're going to  
leave.  
We've lost two specifically to that."**

**"I had one of those last year who went to look for a job  
because he wanted to come up for an equity correction,  
and he doubled his salary by going to Virginia."**

**"The other issue is spousal hires"**

Some productive researchers complained that they were "punished for success" since they had to endure the increased workload that comes with administrating a grant, and they also had to absorb a continuing flow of work "documenting" the quality of the program that they are in for administrators.

Administrivia

**"And the irony a lot of the time is the reports just tell us  
how well you're doing on all this stuff that you don't have time to do  
because you have to do these reports."**

***“And it’s always so urgent, these reports, we need them, we need them next week,  
and then we never hear what happens to the reports.  
Are we busting our bums so that it sits in someone’s desk?  
For the next year? And it never get used?”***

Workload is particularly a theme among productive researchers because UHM has still not developed an adequate infrastructure to support the research enterprise. The lack of research infrastructure affects workload, but there are also problems that researchers identified with uneven quality of the support available to productive researchers. Worst is the fact that apparently whether you do good or poor work, appears not to matter. Here are some quotes that capture faculty frustration with the lack of research support:

Workload for Productive Researchers/Lack of Structural Support for Research

***“So I make my own photocopies.***

***I have to be the coordinator of the weekly lecture from my department.***

***I buy the leis from my pocket, I print the handouts for the speakers,  
I have to deal with the whole sending messages back and forth,  
getting the abstracts, I’m the person doing everything with absolutely  
no support. And the same for any grants. Absolutely no support.”***

***“Our part-time grant writer got cut for A&H, her last day is the end of this month. It’s a half-time position. And she’s gone. So there will be no support in A&H for grant writing, no institutional support.”***

***“I’ve had trouble for every grant I’ve had, and I’ve been here for five years now,***

***I have had trouble with ORS every time.***

***So whether it’s been like my fellowship is sitting in a pile  
and they refuse to get to it when all they need,***

***I mean the thing is granted, all they need to do is create an account  
and tell the foundation to send the money here.***

***I had to call my dean finally after waiting for a month and a half, and  
he had to make a call, and then everything was solved, but it left me  
completely powerless.”***

Now take this exchange, as a very specific example of the problems that faculty reported

***“And the worst part is I see a couple of good people[in research administration],  
and then I see other people who aren’t good and they aren’t treated any differently.”***

***There are several people there who, when you find out who your grant is assigned to, you go, 'Uhhh' or 'Yesss!' and it shouldn't be that way. People who are carrying the largest burden, what ends up happening is they get other stuff dumped on them when there's an emergency anyway''.***

There are particular limitations, like the P-card limitations that particularly frustrate active researchers. Take this exchange between those with grants (one from a professional college and two from a science departments) and recall that these groups were mixed in terms of participants from across disciplines and sometimes colleges, so these the similarities in these exchanges should be noted:

***“Raise the purchasing limits. For those of us with grants with money to spend, don't make me write a document to replace a \$4K lens on a microscope.”***

***“\$2500 is ridiculous!”***

***“And the P-card limits!”***

***And the way the P-cards are handled is a nightmare.”***

#### Crumbling Facilities

Researchers also lamented the sometimes daunting problems that face them when they try to do cutting edge research in deteriorated facilities:

***“ The support of research facilities is problematic as well.... In my opinion, in life and biological sciences...there should be some planning for some new modern facilities, but there doesn't seem to be discussion about that. I mean we are in a position of maybe renovating our building but because of budgetary issues any possibilities of doing something creative with either the undergraduate or graduate programs is probably not going to happen.***

***“It seems that it's in the university's long-term interest to maintain the buildings... I don't really understand, in the long run it's cheaper to maintain the building than to replace one, but we don't seem to be doing that.”***

***“They've got to take [facilities] more seriously***

**...our elevators or our air conditioning doesn't work  
for more than a week and a half straight.  
So if you were to visit that building for ten days I guarantee  
you that you'll either get stuck in an elevator, the elevators won't work,  
and/or the air conditioning would be out - right now it's both.  
And this is six years by the way!"**

eTravel Woes

Problems with faculty travel, particularly the "etravel" program came in for a very large number of complaints. Some of the complaints focused on the specifics of the program, particularly the fact that you still need to print out the travel forms after "submitting" them on line, and then there were more general complaints about excessive requirements for accountability in travel that struck some faculty as being grounded in the assumption that researchers were going to cheat the system. That is most eloquently captured by this exchange between two researchers (one in a sciences and one in humanities).

**"That's something I hear routinely from colleagues  
that the entire mentality of the system is that we're misbehaving  
children,  
that we need to be controlled, and that they need to look at every  
dollar  
that we are spending. Well, if that's your mentality then  
why do they hustle you so damn hard to bring in money?"  
"I have my return boarding pass but not my trip there.  
Oh I'm sorry, I can't reimburse you."**

**"I once had my secretary complained to the fiscal officer that my  
presence in the office was physical evidence that I had returned. And they  
bought it!"**

Many faculty reported deep frustration with the travel bureaucracy:

**"eTravel forms drive me nuts, okay? We put in, the reason for travel  
is,  
I'm going to a conference to give this presentation on blah-d-blah.  
They've been sending back saying you need to  
explain how this is related to your job.**

**I'm an academic, I do research, I present on it."**

**"There's a parsimonious attitude that you run into that  
'you don't really need that, do you?  
Because it's going to make trouble for me to do it for you.'**

***Rather than saying, 'Wow, that's exciting that you're doing that research,'  
you get a sense of not believing,  
skeptical and suspicious, that we have to prove  
that we're not goofing around when we're traveling,  
we have to prove that we're not ripping off the university out of travel  
funds,  
and it's really a nasty attitude and a lot of our faculty  
don't even bother to try and get grants  
because it's such a pain to deal with that attitude.'***

***"I had faculty, new faculty, just recruited who were required  
to produce proof that they had met with the scholars  
that they said they were going to meet with,  
which was like getting a note from your mother after they had  
traveled.***

***They had to tell prominent well renowned scholars that they needed  
a note certifying that they met on the date they said they would meet.  
This is the level to which eTravel has taken us...  
it impedes research period when  
they make it that insulting!"***

Byzantine Bureaucracy

In general, faculty are very frustrated with outdated and non-user-friendly fiscal policies. But there are comments that suggest that the discontent extends beyond the "medieval fiscal processes" to a broader "culture of can't."

***"I was talking to several of my colleagues after I got the invitation.  
The general thing that most people said was "where do you start?"  
... the byzantine bureaucracy at the university  
has so many road blocks that it's a constant challenge,  
and so people have to work harder to get the same amount of work  
done here  
as you would at any mainland university,  
and that's the reality of the situation."***

Researchers across the campus seemed to feel that there is a culture within the administration that does not function to support, and in some extreme cases does not even wish to support faculty engaged in research. Instead, in certain places on the campus, faculty reported being treated like children, with staff assuming that they cannot be trusted, and certainly are not respected or recognized for what they do.

***“But the clerical and administrative people who have been here for twenty-plus years really have a long history of working to support the educational endeavors, so when you go in and ask them to do something related to research, it’s not only a knowledge issue, but it’s an attitude and behavioral pattern as well. They don’t see it as their job. And short of somebody sitting them down and saying, our focus has changed, your job focus has changed, you not only have to support the syllabuses and those things you do for education, you are expected to order stationary supplies, or do whatever. Many of them wouldn’t even know how to do something like that and then charge it to a grant. And even if they did, they don’t see it as their job. So then you as the researcher, it’s not your job to tell them what their job is because it creates a lot of political animosity and problems so I think it, the leaders [of the institution] have to say***

- this is part of their job – and work with those employees***
- so it’s not enough to move faculty along,***
- you have to move support people along at the same time.”***

Lack of Respect for Research and Scholarship

A more general sense was that faculty, no matter how outstanding, were not appreciated for their contributions.

***“I think at other major research universities what happens is that things are more formal. And so there are formal ways of recognizing their best faculty, and here we have a few research awards, but I don’t see Manoa being treated as the Research 1 center, we’re here to educate the population of Hawaii, so that graduate education and research gets quite forgotten in some ways. And at Research 1 universities I’ve seen, really senior people get recognized with a professorship with a name, or regent’s or board of regent’s professor. I have had colleagues here who have now left who were really well known in their areas, and, thinking of their career, it pains me to see that. In any other university they would have been regent professor or professor so and so and so, and all kinds of titles and recognitions,***

***a beautiful webpage where all that is very explicit  
and done by a public relationship office,  
and that just doesn't happen here, so someone with a career here  
compared with someone working in say Georgetown or wherever,  
they have had for the entire career zero recognition here."***

In general, faculty feel that administrators are incurious about what they do, not particularly supportive of high quality scholarship, and not sufficiently concerned about the bureaucratic processes that drive active researchers crazy. In short, there is a perceived lack of leadership on this crucial issue. Respondents seemed to feel that this lack of administrative support for excellent scholarship and research, coupled with a culture of distrust around the expenditure of funds, creates an environment that fails to nurture excellence. This feeling was not simply expressed by the "soft sciences" and "humanities" but from all parts of campus.

***I think that faculty should offer workshops for lower and higher  
administrative people,  
to teach them what it means to be a researcher.  
(Much agreement)***

***"They don't know, they don't care."***

***"They don't understand what humanities people do."***

***"They just don't understand.  
And I don't think it's malicious but...they don't have a clue."***

***"I thought it was just humanities but I guess it's the sciences too"***

A Room of One's Own

Finally, the faculty felt that the campus seemed slow to embrace big ideas, and that there is an institutional failure to nurture the intellectual life of the campus. Take this exchange as an example of two researchers wishing for a space on campus to exchange ideas:

***"I really think that it would be very important for all faculty and researchers  
on this campus to know that there is one place they can feel as full human  
beings,  
with some respect, and what would help is something like a faculty lounge.  
...a place of quietude.  
I don't see what the problem is in getting us two rooms in campus center,  
where there is table cloth on the table, and somebody waiting on you.***

***"...we can bring our food to that room***

***...sit in a place that's not crowded, not smelly, and it's clean,  
...that's the minimum of respect we show to faculty and researchers  
who contribute tremendously to this institution.  
I mean every other university I went to on the mainland had that,  
and some of them were really luxurious. I'm not asking for luxury.  
And the space is available.  
Whenever there is a little special event, we get invited to lunch,  
those rooms appear out of nowhere and there are table clothes,  
so obviously they're not being used every day...  
I'm not asking for building a new restaurant or something,  
I mean it's space that is available. And I know how meaningful it is  
when there is once in a while a little party where someone treats us with  
respect."***

Obviously, these comments suggest that there is certainly room for improvement in the conduct of research on the UHM campus. Recall that these assessments come from those deemed the most promising mid-career researchers on the campus. Complaints and concerns range from the absence of tangible supports to research productivity: these include viable GA stipends, sensible and easy to use travel software (and policies), grant writing assistance, fiscal policies (and personnel) that are researcher friendly, facilities that support good research, and elimination of make work bureaucratic activities (which detract from research).

More generally, the clear message to all who read this is that, at least from the faculty perspective, there is an absence of appreciation for the research enterprise, and excellent scholarship, so the institution is perceived as slow to change those long standing problems that impede such work. Beyond this, researchers long for leadership that understands the need to "think big ideas" and create stimulating, cross disciplinary spaces where researchers can meet across traditional academic divides to celebrate each other's work and accomplishments.

That longing, taken together with the beginning of this document brings us full circle. As the discussion winds down, let us not forget (because the researchers did not) the many great strengths of this campus. Indeed, out of those many strengths physical, social and geographic as well as the unheralded role played by low level administrators (e.g. Chairs), offices that work as they should and nurture the research enterprise (particularly the IRB and the library). Finally, there is an intellectual climate that because of the many aspects of the campus that exist outside the Eurocentric mainstream of the academy, support forms of interdisciplinary work that make the University of Hawaii at Manoa a very exciting place in which to create knowledge for the new millennium.

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APPENDIX 1

31 October 2008

Name  
Dept  
Address

Dear <first name>:

We are writing to invite you to participate in what we anticipate to be a truly interesting exchange on research at UH-Manoa. Our office, along with the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Faculty Mentoring Program, is seeking to explore what is working and what can be improved in the research enterprise on our campus. The project is entitled **Doing Excellent Research at UHM: What it takes to thrive in less than optimal circumstances.**

The most obvious markers of research's essential interdependence and collaborative nature are the acknowledgements, footnotes, and bibliographical citations that delineate the intellectual communities to which the work belongs; the co-authoring and collaborative investigations; and the conferences and workshops at which scholars gather to share and critique each other's work. In a most meaningful way, the craftsmanship evident and explicit in the research in which each discipline engages is stunning evidence of the interdependence of a scholarly community like UH-Manoa.

To develop a complete appreciation of the successes and challenges of doing research on our campus, we have sought to identify mid-career scholars who show great promise as researchers among your faculty. Your name was among those we received. We are seeking to construct diverse groups of Manoa faculty to participate in a series of facilitated discussion of how research at our campus is conducted, as well as challenges that face highly productive faculty on our campus.

Faculty who are available would participate in a facilitated discussion of how research at our campus is conducted, by sharing your experience with research at a one-hour focus group session at a date and time that best suits your schedule. We have planned a number of times from which you can select one. Please respond by Friday, xxx, noon. Either write to us on e-mail: [cte@hawaii.edu](mailto:cte@hawaii.edu) or mark the attached schedule and return a response to us by campus mail—just fold and tape. We will also forward the schedule to you via e-mail for your convenience

These discussions are meant to provide the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education with faculty views of the state of the

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research enterprise on our campus. As a faculty invited to one of the facilitated, informal exchanges on practices and approaches in research, preparation is minimal. Please just consider these two questions: *What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as nourishing and supporting you?* and *What about doing research here at UHM would you describe as having negative qualities or interfering with your work?* . These discussions will be transcribed and used both to document the vitality of research on our campus as well as to improve and enrich the research process by streamlining support services and identifying problems.

These elements of the research enterprise will help focus our planned discussions. We look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

Meda Chesney-Lind  
Women's Studies and  
VCRGE  
Program

Kathie Kane  
Center for Teaching Excellence  
Faculty Mentoring

APPENDIX 2

**Doing Excellent Research at UHM:  
What it takes to thrive in less than optimal circumstances**

**Co-Principal Investigators:**

**Meda Chesney Lind, Women's Studies and Research and Graduate Education**

**Kathie Kane, Center for Teaching Excellence**

Thank you for participating in our research project. The aim of this project, as we've mentioned in our introductory letter, is to explore what works well to support researchers here at UHM, and what are impediments to conducting good research. You are being asked to participate because (fill in the blank).

Participation in the project will consist of filling out a brief 7 question basic demographics form about yourself, and participation in one of four focus groups with other faculty interested in research at UHM. The focus groups will explore the aim of this project. There will be about seven to eight participants in each focus group. It is estimated that each focus group will be about 1 hour. Approximately twenty eight people will participate in the study. The focus groups will be video taped for the purpose of transcription. After the transcriptions are complete, the DVDs will be destroyed.

Data from the interview will be summarized into broad categories. No personal identifying information will be included with the research results. The demographics information will be used to describe participants in this project in write ups of the results in the publication *Kaunana* and possibly other publications. Completion of the demographics form should take no more than 5 minutes.

The investigators believe there is little or no risk to participating in this research project. Participating in this research may be of no direct benefit to you. It is believed, however, the results from this project will help find solutions for improving the research environment for Faculty here at UHM.

Research data will be confidential to the extent allowed by law.

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Agencies with research oversight, such as the UH Committee on Human Studies, have the authority to review research data. All research records will be stored in a locked file in the investigators' office for the duration of the research project. All research records will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time during the duration of the project with no penalty, or loss of benefit to which you would otherwise be entitled.

You will be provided with a copy of this letter to take with you after participation in this focus group.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact the researchers, Meda Chesney Lind at 956-6313 ([meda@hawaii.edu](mailto:meda@hawaii.edu)), Kathie Kane at 956-6978 ([kok@hawaii.edu](mailto:kok@hawaii.edu)).

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007. ([uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu))