For the Record: Discrepancies in selections from the 2011-12 PBC personnel position priorities

By Doug Dykstra, Chancellor Windward Community College

This statement is in reference to my written testimony prepared for presentation to the House Finance Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee of the 2013 Hawaii State Legislature. I was asked by the Vice President for Community Colleges to prepare testimony that would:

- explain the growth experienced by the college in recent years;
- describe factors that made the growth possible;
- briefly outline college needs for the proposed lump sum funding from Enrollment and Performance Target Funding Initiatives.

The lump sum budgeting proposal would provide substantial funding supplements to the college based upon college achievements of enrollment targets and performance targets on an annual basis. After addressing the college’s need for new and replacement equipment funding it was apparent that only six position requests would be clearly affordable with the likely balance of remaining funds.

Although I was mindful of the PCR Workload priority list produced by the 2011-12 Planning and Budget Council, I departed from its exact ranking list for reasons that follow:

- The top ranked priority for a Financial Aid Officer had already been filled;
- I decided to skip institutional support and those academic support positions not directly related to supporting student learning outcomes. I did so in part because the college has increased its student population by more than 55% in the last seven years while adding only two new tenure-leading instructional faculty re-assigned from vacant Employment Training Center positions to the Vet Tech A.S. degree program. I felt that the State Representatives and Senators would probably want to see, and hopefully would want to support efforts to increase the instructional faculty ranks given this enrollment growth record. I also realized that the 2011-12 PBC planning was based upon a significantly different set of assumptions about the method of legislative funding of University requests. Under the old method, no longer used by the University, individual campuses submitted Program Change Requests (PCR’s) consistent with common themes communicated to the campus by the President’s Budget Committee. The method never worked very well because typically the themes were finalized in May or sometimes even as late as June, so the PBC had to guess what the themes would be. For instance, if the theme had been “Institutional Support then positions like Webmaster (2nd ranked); Grant Writer (4th ranked); Information Specialist (7th ranked); Assistant Registrar (tied for 8th) all might have fit into such a PCR. If such a PCR had been funded the college would have received position #’s and the new funds to hire these positions providing a tremendous windfall for the college. However PCR’s are no longer a part of the Biennium Budget process, as we found out in July 2012.

Lump Sum Funding based on enrollment and performance incentive targets are the new concept to give the campus the money, but we have to ask the System for the position #’s. The concept, if it works, will require the System to re-distribute existing position #’s that have gone unfilled for five or more years (it is rumored that UH-Manoa has 300-500 position #’s that fall in this category. Had our college known in the spring 2012 that PCR’s were no longer a part of budget planning, and that lump sum budgeting was to be the future method of supplementing
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college budgets we would have been far more discerning in our prioritization of position requests...particularly if we realized then that we would only have enough funds to hire approximately six new positions.

- My testimony skipped over Webmaster & Grant Writer to present the college’s need for English Faculty member (3rd ranked); Tutoring/Supplemental Instructional Coordinator (5th ranked); Math Faculty member (6th); and Hawaiian Collection Librarian (tied for 8th). In each instance the rankings skipped fell in the category of academic support not directly related to student learning outcomes. The Hawaiian Collection Librarian is related to student learning in our new Hawaiian Studies Associate of Arts program recently approved by the BOR. Moreover it would allow us to make the valuable Hawaiian Collection accessible to students and no longer kept in closed stacks.

- My testimony then skipped all the way down the list to Molecular Biology Faculty member (tied for 21st) & Biology/Biotech Lab Tech (27th ranked) because these positions do directly relate to student learning in the Agri-pharmatech Certificate of Achievement program recently approved by the BOR. Moreover these positions are currently supported by Department of Labor grant funds that will run out by the end of the upcoming Biennium. To lose these positions would jeopardize the survival of the Agri-pharmatech C.A. program at precisely the time it must go before the BOR for conversion to permanent status. To suffer such a loss would be disastrous to the college’s long term interest in diversifying its certificate and degree offerings.