For the panel on "The University's responsibilities to the Islands of Hawaii."

School of Architecture, UHM
January 16, 2002

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I am going to focus entirely on structure and not at all on substance in my remarks today. Not what UH should do, but how it should do it. There simply is not time for me to do both here.

Before I make my comments about my vision for the futures of the University of Hawaii let me explain that I am a University brat. My mother was a university professor, as was my great uncle before her. I grew up on the campus of a small university in central Florida with discussions of teaching, research and service--including lazy students, conniving professors, incompetent administrators, and interfering Regents--part of my everyday life.

I received a Danforth Foundation fellowship for my graduate study, a fellowship given to people who intend to be university professors. Every summer, all Danforth Fellows would meet together for two weeks to discuss what it means to be a university professor, and what a university should be, from the point of view of values and social needs and responsibilities.

I began teaching in 1957, and have been teaching continuously since then. In all my nearly fifty years of teaching (including more than 30 years in Hawaii), I have never had a sabbatical leave. I love teaching and research and service so much that I can't bear to be away for semester, much less a year.

I have served on many campus committees concerned with the present and future of universities in general and this university in particular. I presently am on the Manoa Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Steering Committee for the Strategic Planning process, currently ongoing.

As a futurist, I have also given scores of lectures and written many papers about the futures of universities.

I tell you all this not to impress--or depress--you with my past but just to help you understand that I really care about higher education and especially about higher education in Hawaii.

And to help you see that we presently have a wonderful, almost unprecedented opportunity now to rethink, re-envision, and substantially re-form higher education here.

We have this opportunity in part because September 11 changed everything forever, and thus requires that we rethink what we are doing here and now, and not just assume we

can go on with business as usual; in part also because the future of the State of Hawaii is extremely uncertain because of 911, and the general economic, social, and environmental changes going on even before 911; and most of all because we have, for the first time, a university president who is himself a stunning and inspiring source of visions and hope, who is urging us to think big and think bold, and is daily modelling for us what that means.

It is with a rush of anticipatory adrenaline that I open the papers everyday to see what new audacious idea has sprung from the President's brain and mouth--New names for our colleges one day, a new med school focussing on sports medicine and human enhancement another day, a division 1 sports program on all campuses the next, and a divinity school equal to that of Yale the next.

The mind boggles on a daily basis.

I am eagerly awaiting the President next to declare that UH will be the world's leader in futures studies--which indeed it already is, though he probably doesn't know or care. And you each are hoping he articulates whatever your dreams and passions are as well.

However, this is not the first time people have had a chance to think boldly and creatively about the future of UH.

The first time was when UH was originally created in the 19th century for very specific purposes, and to serve a clientele quite different from the present.

The second time was after the 2nd World War when UH was re-envisioned and reoriented in a very big way by people who imagined that our peer universities were Harvard and Cal Berkeley, instead of the University of Guam or the University of South Dakota, and who set about making UH become a world class university.

The third time UH was radically re-envisioned and re-formed was during the so-called 60s, when students and their faculty sympathizers rose up and changed almost everything about universities, here and worldwide.

And this is the fourth time. Now, forty years later. There has been no major change from 1973 until the present. Everything that has happened since 1973 has been in reaction to big changes going on around us.

Now we are being challenged by our President to thing big and to act boldly again. And he is showing us how.

But as I witness most of what the faculty and students are doing now during this strategic visioning and planning process, all I see is reaction and fiddling at the margins.

The only visionary ideas I have heard--perhaps there are others here on this panel--come from our President. He says, think big and dream, and thinks big and dreams creatively for us.

We respond by thinking small and tinkering.

The problem is in part that we are so fixated on the present, and so heavy laden by all of the insults and disappointments of the past, that we simply cannot dream. We are afraid to. We don't want to be insulted and disappointed again.

Our president is not mired in our realities. And he urges us to rise above them.

So we need to get out of our crackpot realism and begin to dream undreamt dreams.

There are at least two ways to do that.

One is to see how utterly strange the present is when viewed from various periods in the past, The other is to see how utterly strange the present is by looking at it from several alternative futures.

So consider the present from the past.

Go all the way back:

Back to the tens of thousands of years when humans lived in small tribal societies, before the invention of writing, when all learning came from doing, observing, and playing.

Then consider more recently--two or three thousand years ago--after the invention and evolution of writing, from the time of Aristotle and similar teachers in Asia and elsewhere, when learning for the first time came also from books--handwritten and very rare words on clay, or parchment, or paper.

The modern university was born only one or two hundred years ago out of the industrial revolution, and especially as a consequence of the printing press during which time books exploded, along with the knowledge in them. Public schools and universities were created to serve the novel needs of the emerging industrial state. People had to "go" to school to learn how to be useful industrial citizens.

That is when our University of Hawaii and other land grant universities of the time were created, though UH was specifically intended to serve the more modest needs of an island plantation economy.

Yet, even though developments in information and transportation technologies have proceed apace, we still are stuck in thinking about universities and their futures in terms of the old industrial age, when information was located in physical things, stored in specific locations, and meted out by humans over discrete and scarce units of time.

If there is one big, serious, and overwhelming obstacle to our dreaming of and creating a new and improved UH, it is that gigantic blind spot in our President's vision of the future: He is still fixated on universities as places, as campuses, as buildings, as people doing things primarily face to face.

He is, after all, an urban planner by trade, and that is what urban planners do--design physical spaces. That is what he is justly famous for at Trinity, and it is the mind set he brings to us here.

And that is what you do too, as architects.

That blindness (and the construction industry that governs this State) will be the major obstacles to our envisioning a substantially different and better U of H, in my opinion.

Modern and emerging communication and transportation technologies (and they are, in a way, just different ends of the same technology--you often "go" because you need information, and not because you really need to be physically somewhere else otherwise) are destroying the primacy, necessity, and limitations of the campus--indeed, of the physical, place-based, time-bound, aspect of all human activities including education.

There of course will always be a desire, if not a need, for humans to get together face to face. But it will no longer be the primary reason why we do things as we do. Worrying about what is done where, by whom and for whom, and over what periods of time should no longer drive our vision of the future of UH, or our strategic planning now.

Instead, we should imagine UH from now own as a network, and not as a place.

So we need a new Alma Mater.

One that does not begin "In Green Manoa Valley our Alma Mater stands."

But rather one that begins, "In virtual cyberspace our alma mater hums."

Some of you attended the Systemwide conference on strategic planning held at the Pacific Beach Hotel last Friday. The fact that so many people from all over the system were there is a tremendous testimony to the deep desire of many of us to make UH a better place than it is now--we all care deeply about this university and its futures.

At that conference we were handed a list of concerns that we were to react to as potential "strategic directions."

My reaction was that they most certainly were not strategic directions. They were mainly current complaints.

And 90% of them were due to the fact that we continue to think of UH in terms of campuses, buildings, and programs that have a physical base and location somewhere, that are operational at certain times and not at others, and thus that can not also exist somewhere else or happen at different times (or all at the same time) since we have limited time and space, and limited human and financial resources.

But each one of these problems of the present could be solved, or made vastly better, if we imagined UH not as a physical, time-bound space, but as a network that performs a variety of functions.

That means thinking creatively about what universities should do and need not do, and then imagining how electronic communications technologies--and not physical campuses, buildings, classrooms, laboratories, books, calendars, and clocks--should become the primary backbone on which a new UH is created.

That is a challenge for architects, but in fact cutting-edge schools of architecture already know that, even though physical settlements are still important in and for the futures, they are no longer primary, no longer the driver of everything else.

"Architecture" now means something other than designing and arranging physical space. It means networking functions, information, and activities.

So, a central question you need to address is how can existing spaces be knit together into electronic and eventually post-electronic networks? Especially in a State like ours with so many people separated by water and mountains, and all of us separated by vast distances from various mainlands?

UH must become the leading university in the world to base everything we do--teaching, advising, research, administration, everything--on electronic networks (and their technological successors), and no longer privilege physical campuses, buildings, books, and time slots as the foundations of higher education.

That also means that UH serves the people of this State by defining the UH community on a global as well as on a local basis. We do a profound disservice to everyone if we continue to think of UH as having responsibilities mainly to the islands of Hawaii, this session assumes. Rather, while our responsibilities are to the people of Hawaii, those responsibilities are fulfilled by helping us all to become "glocal", a term popularized by UH Professors Majid Tehraian and Fred Riggs.

"Glocal" means being "local" while being aware of, responsive to, and participative in global processes.

UH is not now and should not be bound only by what is physically and spiritually on these islands, as important as they are. UH must be glocal--and indeed cosmic, as humanity moves from its cradle, Earth, throughout the solar system and beyond.

Should I sing you the Alma Mater I wrote for UH on Mars? No. OK maybe next time.