A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission for Community
and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited Leeward
Community College on October 4, 1996

Judith Watkins, Chair
January 13, 1997

TO: Commission

FROM: Judith Watkins, Chair

SUBJECT: Report of Interim Visit, Leeward Community College, October 4, 1996

Introduction: Leeward Community College completed a comprehensive evaluation in November, 1994. The Commission reaffirmed the accreditation of the college, but asked that the college prepare an interim report on two issues, to be followed by a visit by Commission representatives.

Dr. Judith Watkins, Associate Director of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, visited the college on October 4, 1996. The college prepared for the visit by submitting a written report, compiling supporting documents which were available for review, and gathering individuals from the campus community who were part of the planning and decision making renewal efforts which the college has undertaken since the comprehensive visit.

I met with the Provost, the Executive Committee of the Campus Council (the co-Chairs of the Campus Council, the past chair of the Council, the Dean of Student Services, and the president of the Academic Senate); and the Dean of Instruction. The Provost also notified the campus community of my visit and arranged an open time for individuals or campus groups to schedule conversations. One person took advantage of this opportunity.

Because the college determined that the creation of an effective decision making process should precede introduction of a systematic planning process, the team recommendation regarding decision making will be discussed first.
College Responses to the Team Recommendations

8.1 The team recommends that the College develop and implement a written policy which articulates a decision making process which includes persons in the process who will be affected by the decisions and which clearly states the role and participation of faculty, support staff and students on College governing policy making, planning, and budgeting and special purpose bodies.

The primary vehicle for addressing this recommendation is the Campus Council which was created after the last evaluation visit. The primary charter of this Council is planning, developing policy, and establishing campus priorities in areas of budget and resource allocation. The Council has a formal charter and By-Laws which delineate the composition of the Council. All appropriate college governance groups are included in Campus Council membership.

Since the time of the team visit, the institution has developed the Council organizational structure and operating by-laws, resolved issues over participation and information sharing, and attempted to address institutional fiscal and planning issues. Although the Campus Council is still an evolving planning and campus priority setting body, its role as a decision making body is just now beginning to be seen. The Provost and Campus Council Executive Committee members independently underscored the assessment that the Council is now addressing real decision making issues. For example, the Council determined how institutional duplicating services would be arrayed and what resources would be allocated to those functions. Both stated that the Council had the potential to provide real leadership for the college.

As the centrality of the Campus Council role began to be defined, other issues not really within the Council charter began to emerge. In fact, some in the college community have apparently raised their expectation levels for the Council to the point that matters not directly related to the core charter are being brought to members of the Council for consideration. While such activity might indicate a measure of legitimacy, if not success, for the Campus Council, the danger that the larger campus community and the Council members themselves attach responsibilities to it that it was never intended to address looms.
A continuing area of concern expressed by members of the Council and the Provost might be characterized as a concern about the breadth and depth of understanding about the nature of the decision making and planning initiatives encompassed by the Campus Council framework. Those involved with the Campus Council are aware of, and increasingly more comfortable with, the work of developing the planning and decision making structures. As one moves outward from this group, however, the level of understanding about the Campus Council is much less. The primary internal communication document, THE BULLETIN, which is published every two weeks during the academic year regularly contains a summary of the Campus Council activities and decisions. All parties and constituencies will need to pay special attention to communication efforts as the Campus Council becomes more integrated into the life of Leeward Community College.

1.1 The team recommends that the College create a planning process which is formal, college-wide, systematic and coordinated. The process should set college direction, identify priorities, and use program reviews and research in each sector of the College to measure effectiveness. Planning should be done on an annual basis and should ensure that individual area plans are linked to and reflect the college-wide plan. All segments of the College community should be involved in the process. The College-wide planning process should drive the budget.

The college acknowledges that its institutional planning under the old Education Development Plan system was inadequate. However, the current system, exemplified in the Academic Development Plan, is one to which the Provost and the Campus Council express commitment. The comprehensive team’s recommendation that planning reviews be done on an annual basis may be better served by tying the institutional plan to the two year Hawaii community college and legislative budget cycle.

The Academic Development Plan is being integrated into the statewide Hawaii Community Colleges Strategic Plan, which is itself a part of the University of Hawaii Strategic Plan. This local plan is the primary source document for funding requests or resource reallocations. For the first time the college is exploring the possibility of developing indicators of success which will document
accomplishment of institutional objectives. Such an activity is not without discomfort as those involved struggle with issues of validity, utility, and effectiveness for individual units and for the college as a whole. The institution is at a critical point in development of these indicators and will need to exercise great care to mitigate fears that the indicators might be turned into weapons against parts of the campus. Nonetheless, the institution is encouraged to continue the effort and to exercise leadership for the system in this area.

Conclusions: The college has clearly responded assertively to the recommendations of the comprehensive team in these two areas. Institutional structures and processes are in place to improve the quality of planning and decision making at Leeward Community College. More problematic is the ability of the campus community to recognize that just as no individual or group has a monopoly on good ideas, all members of the organization have a responsibility to set aside outmoded patterns of behavior which inhibit the forward movement of the institution. Leeward Community College will have the opportunity to provide a progress on these and other matters when it submits its regular Midterm Report November 1, 1997.