



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
March 20, 2018 at 2:10 p.m.

By
Donald O. Straney
Vice President of Academic Planning and Policy
University of Hawai'i System

HR 137 / HCR 156 – URGING THE CREATION OF A VIRTUAL CENTER FOR WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Hashem, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on HR 137 / HCR 156.

The University has a strategic goal of increasing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees, and recognizes that targeted outreach, learning, mentoring and other programs help to increase the number of women in such programs.

We provide these examples of initiatives to increase women in STEM, including computer science, but must clarify that these efforts are undertaken across the UH System, within campuses or existing programs:

- The University of Hawai'i Community College system office was awarded a National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant for its project, "Building Relationships to Increase Diversity and Gender Equity" (BRIDGE). The five-year, \$1.1 million project will work with the seven community colleges to improve recruitment, retention, promotion, and success of women faculty in all STEM fields. The BRIDGE grant supports women in all STEM fields, including, but not limited to, computer science.

The project also has a partnership element between the UH CCs and UH Hilo, using virtual tools to connect remote island campus locations in mentoring and coaching trainings for administrators and senior faculty.

The UH President's Commission on the Status of Women, with commissioners appointed from all campuses and the system, has agreed to be a member of the Advisory Board for the BRIDGE program, and discusses issues such as disparities of women employees or students in the STEM fields.

- Maui College's NSF grant awarded for "Capacity Building: Cyber-Security Education across Disciplines with Focus on Minorities and Women," which includes working with high schools.

- Society of Women Engineers at UH Mānoa, established to build community, network with local professional women engineers, and demonstrate the value of diversity in this career field.
- “Girls Who Code” free workshops hosted by Hawai‘i Community College for girls in grades 6-12, affiliated with a national nonprofit association Girls Who Code.
- The “Exploring Diversity and Gender Equity” (EDGE) project which had been awarded to UH Hilo, and aligned with the NSF-ADVANCE goal to increase representation and advancement of female faculty in STEM and in academic leadership positions.

The University continues to explore avenues for increasing our outreach to women to pursue careers in STEM, and we can explore the interesting concept of a virtual center to advance this work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.