My name is Kuʻulani Muise and I wanted to take this opportunity to let you, the University of Hawaiʻi Board of Regents, know my thoughts on the Mauna Kea Science Reserve and the way in which you have managed this area.

If the University of Hawaiʻi is, in fact, a Hawaiian place of learning as it purports, I am assume that its staff, including the members of the BOR, have made themselves aware of Hawaiian worldviews as well as Hawaiian systems of learning in order to best steer an institution whose mission is to provide education based in these understandings.

One such foundation of understanding is the Papakū Makawalu. “Papakū Makawalu is the ability of our kūpuna to categorize and organize our natural world and all the systems within the universe… It connotes the dynamic Hawaiian worldview of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual foundations from which life cycles emerge.” One of the houses of this system is the Papahulilani that is inclusive of the sun, moon, stars, planets, winds, clouds, and atmosphere. If we take this definition out of context, we might assume that the MKSR is reflective of Hawaiian worldviews, but if we fully understand Papakū Makawalu it is also clear that the system of Papahulilani is a balanced system whose experts are spiritually, physically and intellectually attuned to space as well as its relationship to the earth; furthermore, Papahulilani is not the only house in this system, and as it functions as only a piece of the larger whole, including the earth, ocean, flora, fauna, and the systems that sustain them, we see that Hawaiians believe that their systems of learning and understanding need to be balanced and reflective of the natural world, we see that the Mauna Kea Science Reserve is not in line with this understanding.

I touch on this idea of Papakū Makawalu because I want to address this anti-science stigma that is often given to those who are critical of UH’s managements of the MKSR. According to the Papakū Makawalu, science, even astronomy, has a place in our understanding of the world around us, but Makawalu – literally meaning eight eyes- points to the idea that we can not look in only one direction. The University’s lack of good stewardship on Mauna Kea is much like the colossal Thirty Meter Telescope, whose only concern is to peer deeper and deeper into space with its one giant eye and its piercing laser beam, without consideration for the earth that holds it up. This is not makawalu, this is Cyclops science. It is winning the sight of far off stars while losing sight of the earth here at your feet. There are other sciences that have lived on the mountain without destroying other systems forever – there is ecology, geology, archaeology, anthropology, volcanology, entomology, botany, just to name a few. It can be said, then, that the Astronomy Precinct, in its disregard for the other natural systems that co-exist on the summit, is more anti-science than many of its own critics.
To substantiate my claim that the MKSR and UH’s activities within this area are detrimental to other systems on the mountains I quote the 2010 EIS for the TMT which states:

“From a cumulative perspective, the impact of past and present actions on cultural, archaeological, and historic resources is substantial, significant, and adverse; these impacts would continue to be substantial, significant, and adverse with the consideration of the Project and other reasonably foreseeable future actions.”

This has been evidence by the near extinction of the Wēkiu bug that lives nowhere else in the world but on the summit of Mauna Kea, by the history of telescope chemical spills, by the disruption of many archaeological features, by acres upon acres of disturbed and desecrated natural features that, in Hawaiian spiritual and cultural knowing, make up the wao akua, the realm set apart for the gods. In the light of the new extreme focus on Mauna Kea and the University’s mismanagement of the MKSR over the past 47 years, many things have been made clear to a vast audience – including its circumventing of State and county laws.

Specifically, structures and proposed structures in the Astronomy Precinct are in clear violation of land use requirements in the conservation zone under which it falls. Your activities do not meet all 8 of the criteria that are required to operate in this zone, as the observatory complexes have clearly had substantial adverse impacts on the physical and environmental aspects of the land, such as natural beauty and open space characteristics (criteria 6) as well as natural resources within the surrounding area and community (criteria 4). Furthermore, in the case of the TMT, if it were to be built anywhere else on Hawai’i Island in an area that was not ultra-sensitive culturally and environmentally, it would still be in violation of county building codes.

Considering the long-standing history of the UH’s management of the MKSR and its highly volatile relationship with much of the general public as well as its disconnect from the host culture with which it has professed to be in line, it becomes even more astonishing that UH has decided that its latest and arguably most controversial project – the TMT – was an appropriate project to add to the “cumulative adverse impacts” UH has already inflicted on Mauna Kea. The fact that you have already attempted to secure another 65 year lease for the MKSR, given all the evidence to support a case of gross mismanagement, is indicative of the same kind of disregard that has come to characterize UH’s approach to Mauna Kea and to the people who find the mountain central to their cultural identity.