Aloha,

Please find my testimony regarding the management of Maunakea both below and attached.

I attended both BOR meetings at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo in their entirety, and although I considered speaking, wished to cede my time to my students and our community members instead. Here is my written testimony. I would be grateful to know that it is both received and read.

Mahalo.

April 26, 2015

Aloha Board of Regents,

I am grateful for this opportunity to share testimony as it relates to my perspectives on the University of Hawai‘i and the management of our mountain, Mauna a Wākea or Maunakea. Let me begin first by saying that “managing” a mountain is a curious – perhaps even backwards - concept; I believe it is our university system community that needs be managed, and surely the mountain can provide guidance in that regard. In fact, I strongly urge every one of us to consider repositioning ourselves with regard to Maunakea, if we haven’t already, and listen to that mountain to know how to holomua, to move forward together, as an academic community, and in sync with our larger community. If we’re not quite sure how to listen to Mauna a Wākea, we learn.

I am a product of this UH system, having spent a quarter of a century embedded within it. I possess a graduate degree in Geography from UH-Mānoa. I have worked at UH-Hilo and HawCC since the late 1990’s, primarily as a lecturer, but also as a Library Assistant and an Internship Coordinator for Native Hawaiian students in STEM disciples. And I’m currently a student in the Hawaii Lifestyles program at HawCC, soon to graduate with a degree in Hawaiian Studies with an emphasis in hula. I have a tight relationship with UH, but it’s becoming increasingly uncomfortable, disillusioning. I’m involved in formal and informal efforts to indigenous our academic community both in Hilo and system-wide, but am concerned that sometimes our system does not take those vital efforts seriously. Are our institutions Hawaiian places of learning? I believe that our institutional relationship with inappropriate land use and disrespectful development of the summit region of Maunakea suggests that we are, in fact, not.

I’m an academic, a cultural practitioner, a scientist whose discipline (Geography) reminds us that environment and culture are, if not inextricably linked in a symbiotic relationship, then they are, indeed, the same. As an educator, I’ve been taking my students to Maunakea on geography huaka‘i, journeys, several times a year for many years now, and in that role I see myself as a conduit: one through which our learners, our students, can forge personal and meaningful connections with the mountain and environment. And that is precisely what happens. My students participate in appropriate protocols, ones learned together or from their ‘ohana, hālau, etc. These huaka‘i to Maunakea play an important role in my students’ ongoing development of identity, in understanding their selves, their potential, and their kuleana – and it is the unbuilt landscape of the mauna that they experience: the silence, the powerful winds and the sun directly above in the broad sweep of sky, the pu‘u, the forms of fresh water including
Poli‘ahu, Līlīhoe, Waiau. For years I have borne witness to my students connecting directly with those elements, and in a state of reverence and respect. It is the same for me, as another person experiencing that mountain and feeling a deep sense of honor to be in the presence of Wākea.

For many years I have tracked our UH institutional relationship with this mountain, attending meetings, hearings, informing myself fully of issues relating to Maunakea, with regards to the many layers of meaning of the mountain, geologic, climatic, ecological, hydrologic, archaeological, cultural, spiritual, etc. I feel that I have had the privilege of amassing a sizeable body of knowledge and personal experience and keen observation of Maunakea, including compared to the vast majority of my colleagues at UH-Hilo. I share this to provide confirmation that I write to you from a highly informed, well-researched, thoughtful and reflective position, and one of aloha and aloha ‘āina. This learning and these personal experiences, paired with my numerous observations of the profound positive transformation that many of my students have undergone while on the undeveloped areas of the mauna, compel me to demand that you work to ensure that the Thirty Meter Telescope is not constructed on the summit of this sacred and powerful mountain. If it were erected, that very process and that telescope’s presence would exemplify hewa, great wrongdoing, and would taint our university system even more, and serve to further alienate our Native Hawaiian community, as well as supporters and practitioners of Hawaiian culture and institutional indigenization efforts. Simply put, ‘a‘ole TMT.

Mahalo for your consideration and, in advance, for your most pono actions.

Aloha,

Drew Kapp

Geography Lecturer, University of Hawai‘i at Hilo and Hawai‘i Community College (1998 to present)
Student in the Hawai‘i Lifestyles AAS-Hula program at Hawai‘i Community College (2008 to present)
Masters Degree (conferred 1998) in Geography from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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Drew Kapp
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200 W. Kawili St.
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(808) 932-7254
April 26, 2015

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