Testimony by James T. Douglas

As a professor of Microbiology, I am here with other members of our faculty to request that the renovation of Snyder Hall be reinstated. I have been doing research and teaching in Snyder Hall for 35 years. I am deeply concerned about the impact of this deteriorating building on quality of the educational experience of our students, our research endeavors and ability to recruit top faculty.

I recall in the 1980s visiting colleagues would be embarrassed for me, when they saw the condition of Snyder Hall and it has only gotten worst given the history of state funding for maintenance and policies for selecting low bid contractors for temporary fixes. The negative assessments of Snyder Hall have been repeated over and over again in program reviews over the last thirty years.

Funding promises for restoration of Snyder Hall in University budgets have come and gone over the years. The first budget inclusion for renovation I remember was 1985. At that time I remember thinking, that finally the University cares about the long term quality of it's educational experience. Unfortunately, time and time again I have been disappointed on that account. Our most recent cancellation came March 2015. This was after two or three million dollars had been spent to create architectural plans for the complete renovation of Snyder Hall. Snyder Hall was to be similar to the newly renovated Edmonson Hall, our sister Life sciences building.

During my long career at this University, my research has naturally evolved and now I am working on tuberculosis, a major problem in Hawaii and the world. Over time and with the events surrounding 9/11 the Federal regulations for working with tuberculosis have also evolved and now require a new type of lab called a BSL-3. These laboratories are primarily designed to protect the laboratory workers doing day to day research like myself and my graduate students. Their main feature that sets them a part from other laboratories is the unidirectional control air flow, which requires properly designed, installed and balanced air exhaust equipment. The air is removed from the lab environment passed through cleaning filters to the outside. To meet this need so I could continue my research, about 20 years ago I went to facilities management on Manoa campus to ask for their assistance in developing a BSL-3 in a portion of my laboratory space. Well about 10 later, I found some outside engineers and architects who would help me with design. With funding from the Vice President for Research and the Vice Chancellor for Research my design was approved and a building permit for a $590,000 BSL-3 to be placed in the first floor of Snyder Hall was filed in 2010.

Shortly after the approval came through, my BSL-3 was cancelled by the Chancellors office, because Snyder Hall was to be renovated. I was assured a new BSL-3 for me to use would be built on the fifth floor of Snyder Hall. This delay would be about three years from 2011. Edmonson was renovated, but naturally with delays. We thought administration commitments/promises were there, but to my Department's dismay in March of last year (2015) as we were packing and getting ready move the renovation was cancelled. New administrators decided not to honor the commitments made. This was after completion of design for the renovation of Snyder Hall. It is hard to describe the disruption to our research and teaching this has caused, as well as, our distrust of the administration.

Since the Snyder renovation was cancelled, we were told we should go down to Kakaako or (JABSOM) to try and use their BSL-3. However, it has been closed down for six months, since July 2015 and is estimated to remain shut down for another two months. The is no other alternative BSL-3 and our research is at a standstill. If Snyder is renovated as previously planned it will provide a back up BSL-3 for JABSOM's BSL-3, which is frequently closed down. The main reason for JABSOM BSL-3 failures is the low bid policy of the UH and care not taken in design for maintenance issues in associated with air handling.

In summary, we need to restart the Snyder renovation and we need a workable BSL-3 in the Microbiology Department to maintain the quality of education offered by the UH and become competitive with mainland Universities both for recruitment of students, faculty and research funding. This situation is just another example of the break down in governance on the Manoa campus, when commitments to faculty and Departments are not honored by new administrators, as in this case. This lack of commitment has bred distrust, dissatisfaction and a lack of respect within the institution between our administration and faculty.