H. B. 1028  Making an Appropriation for the University of Hawai‘i’s Distance Learning Program

Testimony Presented Before the House Committee on Higher Education

February 8, 2005

By

Linda Johnsrud
Interim Associate Vice President for Planning and Policy
University of Hawai‘i System
Testimony Presented Before the
House Higher Education Committee

February 8, 2005
by
Linda Johnsrud
Interim Associate Vice President for Planning and Policy

H. B. 1028  Making an Appropriation for the University of Hawai‘i’s Distance Learning Program

Chair Tommy Waters and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB 1028 which would appropriate $450,000 for the University of Hawai‘i’s distance learning program. The University appreciates the interest and support of the Legislature in this important area of activity.

The University of Hawai‘i has been a pioneer in the use of technology to bridge the distances among the Hawaiian Islands in order to extend access to higher education for our citizenry. Serving the needs of the people of Hawai‘i through distance learning remains a critical imperative for the entire University of Hawai‘i system.

The University of Hawai‘i Strategic Plan commits us to continuing our efforts to improve and “mainstream” distance learning so that it permeates our institutional culture and support structures. In 2003 the University adopted a new action plan for this area and a system-wide advisory council was created to oversee and support our efforts.

Our distance learning programs and activities continue to grow. As of Fall 2004 the University served 4500 distant learners in 600 courses that were part of 50 degree and certificate programs. Two important changes have been taking place in this area over the past several years.

First, our 15 years of success in using interactive video and cable television technologies to extend our classrooms between the islands is now being enhanced and complemented by Internet-based technologies. Our video classes all use the Internet to improve and enhance student interaction with their faculty and with each other. In addition, our campuses now offer many courses completely on-line with no in-person or video component at all. In fact, this is the fastest growing component of our distance learning program.

Second, the University of Hawai‘i, like most higher education institutions around the world, is experiencing a convergence between the use of technologies to serve distant learners and our on-campus learners. We find that many of our campus-based students also enroll in online courses when given the chance. And online student support services that our distant learners need because they can’t come to campus increasingly represent the service mode preferred by today’s campus-based students who have grown up in a more information and technology rich world than students just a decade ago.

The result of these changes is that the University of Hawai‘i is working to integrate our distance learning activities much more closely with our campus-based learning, in order to benefit both our distant and campus-based students alike.

The University greatly appreciates the support of the Legislature, which has enabled us to create a world-class distance learning program to serve the needs of the people of all islands. Additional resources to support our commitment to distant learners would be welcomed, but the University respectfully requests that first priority be given to the Board of Regent approved biennium budget requests.