University of Hawaii Higher Education Summit
“E Kamakani Hou - 'A New Wind'
Mobilizing for Hawai’i’s Future”
Remarks of Dr. Martha J. Kanter, Under Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
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Good morning and thank you for inviting me to “E Kamakani Hou.” It’s evident that a new wind has already begun to shape and leverage the strengths of the University, its four-year colleges, and its community colleges to better serve the state of Hawaii with both innovation and pragmatism. This higher education summit has the potential to set the stage for ambitious plans that together you will forge as we grow our way out of the past few years and build to the kind of economic and social prosperity that will take our country forward to new levels of excellence and accomplishment.

The University is fortunate to have my esteemed colleague and friend of many years, Dr. MRC Greenwood, as your new president. I know firsthand that she will apply her passion for education and research combined with her visionary thinking to everything she does and will do, and I am confident she will lead the university in the right direction for the people of the great state of Hawaii.

Let me now acknowledge the distinguished thought leaders from across the great state of Hawaii and beyond who are with us this morning.

[Recognize Senator Akaka, Congresswoman Mazie Hirono, Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi, Hawaii State Department of Education.]

Whether you are a scholar of great renown, a member of Congress, the governor, a president, a banker, a doctor, a professor and/or a student, to name just a few of the thought leaders who are here today, you have all come together with a deep commitment to shape a future for Hawaiians and for our nation far better than we have today.

You’ve already done an amazing amount of planning and let me first acknowledge a great milestone that you have reached.

Hawaii, congratulations for being a winner in America’s Race to the Top.
As my boss, Secretary Duncan said, “In order to win a Race to the Top grant, a state must demonstrate capacity for real, dramatic reform as well as the capacity to achieve these reforms.” Hawaii is doing this – and the real winners to benefit from your leadership and hard work will be Hawaii’s children and their parents!

Hawaii’s social and economic future and – in short, its quality of life, will depend on the education of your citizens, especially in today’s rapidly changing global economy, where technology has accelerated the rate at which information and knowledge increase.

The collaboration between Governor Lingle, Hawaii’s Board of Education led by Chairman Toguchi, your Department of Education led by Interim Superintendent Matayoshi and the University of Hawaii led by Chancellor Greenwood is evident in your Common Education Agenda. Hawaii’s performance outcomes are ambitious and achievable. I applaud you for establishing a shared agenda with targets for increasing academic rigor and achievement from early childhood education through lifelong learning. A challenging curriculum is critical for all our students.

Your application showed a broad commitment to student success with overwhelming support from a wide range of partners. If we are going to succeed on behalf of children, it will take everyone working together. Education is everybody’s responsibility, and everyone has a role to play: teachers, parents, elected officials, and school leaders.

Your state’s investment in data systems and the use of data to improve student learning outcomes shows how serious you are about achieving your goals to make sure that all of high school graduates will be college_ and career_ready, able to earn a living wage and enter college without the need for remediation, and that you are making a significant effort to increase the percentage of Hawaii’s working_age adults who will attain a two_ or four_year college degree by 2020.”

I looked at the results of your reform efforts and I saw that your students have already shown dramatic improvements in reading and math over the past seven years because of the increased commitment to high standards that are aligned to rigorous assessments, improved data collection and usage, and an increased focus on teacher effectiveness.
A report from Harvard University graded Hawaii as just one of five states to receive an “A” for world-class student assessment standards, which is an accomplishment that all our states are trying to model.

But you recognize that there’s more to be done. You all know that it will take much more work to eliminate the achievement gap. You have set your goals and have created an action plan to meet those goals.

In learning about Hawaii’s Race to the Top award, Dr. Matayoshi said what I’m sure expresses the vision, commitment and hard work of many of you here today. She said: “Learning opportunities for all students will be reinforced with a strong foundational framework of targeted and systemic education reforms. A collaborative and coordinated effort that expects more and supports more will ensure long-term sustainability and student success.”

In Hawaii, you know best about the unique challenges and what it takes to educate your students. Geographic isolation separates students and whole communities, making collaboration difficult and creating cultural barriers. Some remote populations are separated from positive outside influences. You have high concentrations of urban, high poverty students as well as students who reside in rural and even remote areas. But if you can achieve your goals and broaden community support between your diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, your students will be poised to achieve the state’s goals in concert with President Obama’s 2020 goals.

**Meeting the President’s Goal**

Everything we’re doing at the U.S. Department of Education is supporting our effort to meet the president’s goal that by 2020, America will have the “best educated, most competitive workforce in the world” and, once again, will lead the world in college completion.

The President said: “...in a single generation, we’ve fallen from first place to 12th place in college graduation rates for young adults. Think about that. In one generation we went from number one to number 12. Now, that’s unacceptable, but
it’s not irreversible. We can retake the lead... The single most important step we can take ... is to make sure that every one of our young people...has the best education that the world has to offer. That’s the number one thing we can do...That is a prerequisite for prosperity. It is an obligation that we have for the next generation."

Meeting the President’s goal means we will have to raise our combined rate of two-year and four-year college degree-holders from 40% to 60%. This means that we will need to educate more than 8 million undergraduates over the next decade, beyond the expected enrollments due to population growth.

This is more than a potential increase in enrollment. This is a change in the expectations we place on higher education, K-12, states, stakeholders, and our local communities for student success. It’s an ambitious goal but one that is attainable.

This is the goal that is a driving force behind the administration’s vision for “cradle-to-career” reform. Achieving it will take all of us working together with focus and determination, getting through the worst financial crisis I’ve experienced in my forty years as an educator and building out the educational infrastructure to realize the American dream for students and families.

Fortunately, state and district leaders and educators here understand the keys to success. Not only is this clear in your Race to the Top application, but I know it is an integral part of the University of Hawaii’s strategic plan that clearly aligns the education your students receive with the state of Hawaii’s needs. Your students all over the archipelago benefit from a system that integrates community colleges, four-year baccalaureate programs, research and graduate programs through the PhD level.

Let me mention that I saw your “dashboard” of performance outcomes and I am impressed that you have set so many targets that will help us meet the President’s goal. Your strategic plan aims to increase degree attainment for students particularly Native Hawaiians, low-income students, and those from underserved regions; increase the percentage of all high school graduates who enter the university by 3 percent a year; disburse more Pell grants; get more
students from public and private high schools to your campuses; increase degrees in STEM fields; and increase output in work shortage areas, just to name a few!

These are the same goals I talk about with groups throughout the nation. And I see that you have already made progress by not only meeting the goals last year, but by exceeding them. Your strategies and commitments are already beginning to build a tradition of excellence and your students are the ones who are benefitting. What you are doing here is making history for America’s students and families.

As we gather here at the summit, we have a mood of optimism. But every day in America, more than seven thousand students become dropouts. That means 25% of high school students fail to graduate; that’s 1.2 million students on the streets instead of in school, one student leaving every 22 seconds.

Research conducted by Dr. Cecilia Rouse now at the White House’s Council of Economic advisors, when she was a professor of economics at Princeton University in October 2005, shows that each dropout, over his or her lifetime, costs the nation approximately $260,000. If high schools can’t improve their graduation rates, 13 million students will drop out over the next decade. That is a $3 trillion loss to the nation.

Money never tells the whole story but it’s a benchmark. I add my own concerns that for every student we lose, for every adult who can’t read or write, for every child who’s not ready to enter kindergarten, we chip away little by little, often unknowingly, at our democracy, the most precious gift that drives our nation forward.

International tests in math and science show our students trail their peers in other countries. American students are falling behind them in critical areas like language and science. The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress report showed that we’ve made little progress in increasing the reading levels of fourth graders.

In higher education, we all know that too many of our college students need remedial education; and millions of jobs go unfilled each year for lack of trained workers.
Your students however will benefit from the higher standards they will have to meet. By focusing on results and accountability and by aligning your standards with those nationwide, your students will be better prepared to enter higher education and become part of Hawaii’s workforce. They will be ready for post-secondary opportunities—and they will need to be.

In June I spoke at Georgetown University when their Center on Education and the Workforce released *Help Wanted*, their jobs report. According to the report, roughly two out of three jobs in Hawaii will require some college education by 2018, one of the highest rates projected in the country. The report says that the U.S. may not have the postsecondary capacity to graduate enough students to meet the 2018 job projections without increasing our graduation rates by 10% per year.

Like you throughout the University of Hawaii system, there are already many of our states, colleges and universities that are reexamining their policies and procedures to not only bring more students into college, but to get them across the finish line.

When Congress passed and President Obama signed the Reconciliation Act, they approved our goal to implement direct lending in July, saving more than $60 billion dollars over the next decade by ending bank subsidies for student higher education loans.

They chose to invest those savings in students and also to reduce the federal deficit.

The Reconciliation Act now affords educational opportunity to the top 100% of Americans, regardless of income, providing more than $40 billion in the Pell Grant program to ensure that eligible students from low-income families will be able to go to college.

The maximum grant for 2010-11 is $5,550 which became available July 1st, and we have requested $5,710 for 2011-12, contingent upon our FY 2011 budget policy to move all of Pell grants to the mandatory side of the budget. We hope to increase the maximum amount to almost $6,000 by 2017.

- It makes repaying student loans more affordable for students by expanding the income-based student loan repayment program.
Borrowers who assume loans after July 1, 2014, will be able to cap their student loan repayments at 10 percent of their discretionary income. If they make their payments, they will have the balance forgiven after 20 years. Teachers, nurses, police, firefighters, those in government, the military and other public servants will have any remaining debt forgiven after 10 years.

It provides $2.55 billion dollars in mandatory funding over 10 years for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions.

It also provides $2 billion dollars over four years for community colleges to help unemployed Americans gain the knowledge and skills to enter or reenter the workforce.

Also states will receive $750 million over the next five years, more than double the current funding, for College Access Challenge Grants to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in college and manage their student loans.

As you can see, the Education Affordability part of the Reconciliation Act will increase access to college for millions more Americans.

But the centerpiece of our higher education agenda will be College Completion.

Nationally, our college-going rates are rising, but there is still a persistent gap between different groups of students. African American students earn bachelors’ degrees at half (18%)—and Latinos at one-third (11%)—the rate of white students (34%). Currently, low-income students earn bachelors’ degrees at one-eighth the rate of their more advantaged counterparts (9% vs. 75% by age 24).
Furthermore, there is a real problem that makes college even more expensive for students, families and states, and that is what we call time-to-degree.

If we put our students’ success first, if we support students to complete their degrees, this will have large payoffs in terms of cost-savings and the numbers of students we graduate.

We have to make sure students are better prepared when they get to college so they don’t have to rely on remediation before they can begin their real coursework. We have to ensure our students’ success for the sake of our economy and our nation.

To date, 23 states, including Hawaii, have joined the Complete College America, a new non-profit devoted to reaching President Obama’s 2020 college completion goal. Leaders from each of these states have promised to make college completion a legislative priority and they are sharing completion models and strategies from across the country.

The Education Trust has also brought together university presidents and academic leaders from 10 large public systems of higher education, again for the purpose of sharing data and models to increase college completion.

At the federal level, our higher education agenda will be focused on leveraging federal resources, grant making and other opportunities to support efforts of individual institutions, consortia and states to move us toward the President’s 2020 goal.

At the heart of our college completion agenda is the need to increase the quality of our educational programs and services.

There is a tremendous amount of research that professors can use to increase student achievement if they have the professional development and time to adopt the practices that result in higher levels of performance and success.

America’s accreditation, quality assurance and compliance processes are in need of dramatic improvement as you’ve no doubt heard.

We are also working to increase the transparency about a college education so students and families have the facts about costs and outcomes when they are deciding which institution to choose.
We are looking at the best examples of using technology and innovation to reduce costs while raising quality. We’ve proposed a major open learning initiative, whereby we would provide funds to community colleges and universities to collaborate to develop, adopt and use free, high-quality open education courses and materials for students.

Finally, high on our priority list is to support to institutions and accreditors to document the value of higher education to the public, to explain the value of the degrees and certificates that students earn, and to demonstrate the economic and social impact of degrees on the workforce and our democratic society.

Today’s students are living in a global economy that characterizes the 21st century, different from the one most of us grew up in, and they will depend more on the occupation they choose than the specific industry or company that will employ them.

Their success rests on their ability to be innovative, entrepreneurial, and visionary.

What does that mean for us? I think it means that it is not enough to educate students for a job today. We must be educating our students for the future. As the Help Wanted report points out: nearly two-thirds of the 46 million jobs made available by 2018 will require workers with at least some college education. A third of all openings, about 16 million jobs, will require a bachelor’s degree or higher. And that is just seven short years from now.

Your P-20 Councils are a good example of support that will help us succeed. They will engage public and private education entities at all levels and other stakeholders and will help position Hawaii to implement comprehensive reform. Your goal to increase the percent of working-age adults in Hawaii with two or four-year degrees or better by 2025 is the right one. It will help educate your students to become part of a workforce that will increase our economic prosperity.

Today’s students will have many jobs, and will change careers a number of times, so they have to be equipped for lifelong and continuous learning. They have to demonstrate the outcomes that the American Association of Colleges & Universities has captured in their recent study “Raising the Bar.”
The AAC&U study revealed that 89% of employers want colleges and universities to place more emphasis on written and oral communication. Some two thirds of them also want more emphasis on science and technology, global knowledge, teamwork skills, cross-cultural competence, and ethical decision-making.

American higher education needs to equip students with the experiences, skills and resources to succeed in their future – a future in which they’ll hold multiple jobs of increasing complexity, as members of increasingly diverse communities.

We need to look at what works, according to our best research – and bring it to scale.

We need to launch a sophisticated access-quality-completion campaign on every campus of every institution – in order reclaim America’s place as first in the world, by 2020.

We can already see many institutions, systems, and states changing their practices to meet these goals that our president has set. My boss, Secretary Duncan, calls this the quiet revolution--and it is a revolution being led by leaders like you at the state and local levels with state superintendents, local lawmakers, district leaders, union heads, school board members, principals, teachers, parents and students all working toward common education goals.

There are roles for everyone to play. But we know that the effectiveness of teachers is the most important factor in students’ success, so we must improve our teacher education programs and attract and enable more Americans to become teachers. Our ability to get better, more qualified teachers into our classrooms over the next five years, will impact the shape of public education for the next 30 years. Secretary Duncan has called this “a once-in-a-generation opportunity.” Between now and 2015, we will need to bring more than a million teachers into the nation’s K-12 and higher education systems.

You have a strong teacher education program, but we need to improve our teacher education programs nationwide because good teachers are the ones who can lift our children out of poverty and inspire our children to succeed.
Your leadership can help us to bridge research and practice critical to moving forward. We must raise the bar for successful teacher preparation programs because today much more is asked of teachers.

They’re asked to achieve academic growth for all students, ones with ever-more diverse needs. They’re asked to teach in high-poverty and high-needs schools. And they’re asked to use data to improve their instruction and drive a cycle of continuous improvement for their students.

Teaching has never been more important and the need to dramatically increase student success has never been so urgent.

I know you take this charge seriously. Your Race to the Top application said that you plan “to cultivate the best educators and deploy them in the state’s neediest locations.” You recognize the needs of our schools and children who aren’t served by the best educators. Your state’s plan to provide highly qualified teachers working in Zones of School Innovation with $3,000 and highly effective principals with $10,000 is a plan I hope other states will follow.

It is teachers who will help our students move forward. And now that we have just awarded the Race to the Top assessment grants, we can look forward to better ways to measure and assess college and career readiness, and give us more and better information about assessing teacher and school performance related to student achievement.

To reach the President’s goal of having America regain its position as the nation with the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, our teacher preparation programs, our higher education system, and our K-12 systems- have to get dramatically better.

In this beautiful state, with your unique cultural diversity, and as the birthplace and boyhood home of our President, I can safely say you are on the right track, yet there are real challenges ahead.

So I urge you all to embrace the sense of urgency we have in Washington for our students to succeed. I urge you to follow the advice of your 2010 teacher of the year, Wima Chulakote, who tells his students, “a focused mind is the most powerful force in the universe. You cannot lose unless you quit trying.”
Never quit trying.

Thank you.