9 November 2010

To: Reed Dasenbrock, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
   Gary Ostrander, Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education

Cc: Brian Taylor, Dean, SOEST
    Alan Teramura, Interim Dean, College of Natural Sciences
    Patricia Cooper, Interim Graduate Dean
    Chris Womersley, Zoology Chair
    Joe Margraf, SCRU, USGS
    Charles Birkeland, HCFRU
    Alan Friedlander, HCFRU

From: Tim Tricas, Dave Carlon, Steve Robinow, Marguerite Butler, Cindy Hunter, Julie Brock
       Department of Zoology Curriculum Committee

Re: Hawaii Cooperative Fisheries Unit and Academic Programs

We are contacting you for assistance to reverse the recent separation of the Hawaii Cooperative Fisheries Research Unit from the Department of Zoology. The HCFRU has been an integral part of our undergraduate and graduate education program for more than 45 years. This unit serves several important functions for the success of our undergraduate and graduate academic programs. The Department of Zoology is currently involved in expansion of our Department and curricula, and we believe this loss of faculty and the unit will have immediate and future adverse impacts on our academic and research programs.

Members of the HCFRU have taught important courses and seminars in our Department for decades. In recent years these include the only course in Fisheries Science (ZOOL 466) at UH Manoa and the highly popular course on Corals and Coral Reefs (ZOOL 410). These courses are a natural complement to several undergraduate and graduate courses in invertebrate and vertebrate biology, thus provide important depth to our program. These courses provide our students not only classroom concepts but also introduction to current scientific problems that face scientists in the workforce. Students who take these courses often find employment in state/federal agencies or continue on to graduate school, thus they support our goal to provide human resources to higher education and the community.

The HCFRU has a highly attractive program to graduate students interested in study of the biology, dynamics and conservation of Hawaiian and Pacific coastal resources. It has provided opportunity and resources for quality projects that become graduate theses. The emphasis on field problems provides an important resource that puts our students in touch with the direct application of fisheries classroom theory. We consider this an irreplaceable resource in our education and graduate training.

Finally, there is current planning for a cross-college degree-granting program in Marine Biology that was proposed to include training in marine fisheries, an area of study of great interest among several academic
units on campus, NOAA and the state of Hawaii. We are very concerned that the loss of the HCFRU and its cooperating faculty in Zoology will make this degree impractical.

It is of great concern to us that our faculty were not consulted on these ramifications for our current and future academic programs. We urge that you meet with us to determine how this can be resolved.
Dear Vice-Chancellor Ostrander and Interim Deans Cooper and Teramura,

We are writing to request a meeting with you to discuss the termination of one of our affiliate faculty, Dr. Alan Friedlander. There are several aspects of this action that are very troubling and we think need revisiting.

1. Dr. Friedlander is the chair of 4 graduate student committees in Zoology and is a member of the committees of students in Zoology, EECB, and Geography. His termination occurred without any discussion with the Zoology Graduate Chair and the Chair of the EECB program, and as far as we know, no discussion regarding what his termination would do to the Zoology or EECB graduate programs.

2. We in the Zoology Department and the EECB Program consider Dr. Friedlander to be a valued member of our faculty. He is our only fisheries biologist and he teaches a course critical to our graduate programs. Further, he has maintained an open lab for the mentoring and training of undergraduate marine biology students in addition to his work with graduate students. He has built a very strong program in the short time he has been here, and has consistently maintained a scholarly publication record. He is doing everything we would ask of a regular tenure-track faculty member.

3. Dr Friedlander was told “he is not the kind of person” (personal communication from Dr. Friedlander) the university wants to have on campus. He is apparently considered a “bad” person, and “maintains a hostile work environment” (personal communication from Dr. Friedlander), an image that does not square with any interactions we in the Zoology Department or the EECB Program have had with him. If he is such a bad influence and maintains a “hostile workplace” it would seem that you should be able to come to a meeting with the Zoology Graduate Chair and EECB Chair, at least, and explain what it is about his character that is so bad that he should be removed from campus, from our graduate programs, and from supervising his graduate students.

We know there is an issue with a grievance that has been filed against Dr. Friedlander, and at least one of his graduate students. Without getting into the details of that, we do have to say that we are somewhat dumbfounded about the response of the University to this situation. We understand that personnel matters are of great concern, and that the issue of violence in the workplace, whether physical or verbal, is a serious one. But we also are concerned that the word of one person filing a grievance can result in the immediate termination of a valued member of our faculty with no reasonable investigation, and without, at least, the knowledge of the graduate chairs of the programs to which the faculty member belongs. This suggests that any one of our non-compensated faculty can be subject to removal at any time without our prior knowledge.

26 October 2010
In sum, we respectfully demand that Alan Friedlander be re-instated as a member of our graduate faculties. Our students need his mentoring and our programs need his expertise. We also expect that whatever the issues were between Dr. Friedlander and the person filing the grievance, the University will work to resolve those issues in a fair and balanced manner and keep the program chairs informed.

With best regards,

Les Westling

For the Zoology Department and EECB Program Graduate Faculty

cc: Chancellor Hinshaw, Vice Chancellor Dasenbrock, Dean Taylor
cc: J. Magraff, USGS
Dear Alan, Gary, and Reed (alphabetically ordered),

I would like to thank each of you for taking the time to talk with me today about the HCFRU/Friedlander issue.

As I expressed to each of you today, the Department of Zoology is very concerned about this issue. We will not be satisfied with any solution less than the re-establishment of the HCFRU and Alan Friedlander back as cooperating faculty with the Department of Zoology.

Each of you has suggested that there is more to this issue than we are aware. We are doing everything we can to get a copy of the "fact-finding" report. We have requested copies of this report from Dr. Ostrander and Dr. Friedlander. For us to be better informed, we need to see this document. While we may have no "legal" standing, the faculty and students of the Department of Zoology are certainly damaged by the current situation.

I understand that there is a very narrow window of opportunity for the three of you to meet this week to discuss this issue. I would like to encourage you make this issue a priority so that you can help us reach a successful resolution.

Lastly, I would like to comment that we live in a very litigious environment, one that is overly risk-averse. Please do not let lawyers dominate the decision making process. We hope that truth and reason, not fear of litigation, will guide the decision making process.

Thank you.

-Steve
Dear Dr. Greenwood and Ostrander,

I am writing to you after hearing some news that will impact my education at University of Hawaii. I have been fortunate enough to be working under Dr. Alan Friedlander at the Hawaii Fisheries Cooperative Unit while pursing my PhD in Zoology. I have recently learned that the University is moving the COOP headquarters to UH Hilo. I am involved in two projects in Oahu and one project with Seychelles government under the COOP unit and guidance of our supervisor. I am worried that the transfer of the unit headquarters could result in us losing the supervisor on site as well as necessary equipments.

Another concern that I have is, since UH Hilo offers no PhD program in zoology, that if I were to move to Hilo with my advisor, I will be left astray. However if I decide to stay in Oahu, I would need to figure out a way to visit Hilo at least couple times during the semester to discuss my research with my advisor and for committee meetings.

Last thing but not the least, the utmost trouble that we have is the up-keeping of our ongoing projects. One of our projects must be carried out every month and with our base account currently being frozen, we are wondering how we could possibly get our gas and equipment maintenance materials as well as our monthly RA stipends, especially if the unit moves to Hilo.

I appreciate that you and the university are working hard to have a smooth transition, but I wanted to point out some of the serious negative impacts it is having on me and the other students alike.

Best regards,

Hal Koike