

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT



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Annual Report on Operations of the
Hawai'i Research Center for Futures Studies

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HAWAI‘I RESEARCH CENTER FOR FUTURES STUDIES
Activities for the year 2020-2021

INTRODUCTION

Since the last legislative report, the Center has continued its tradition of collaborative faculty and student research, consultations, and workshops, both in Hawai‘i and internationally. In what follows is a series of recommendations to the State of Hawai‘i, and a brief description of a selection of activities undertaken by the Center.

A detailed account of the work by the director, associates, and students working together under the auspices of the Hawai‘i Center for Futures Studies can be found on our website <http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/>.

Our graduate researchers, affiliate researchers, and faculty researchers have expertise in a wide variety of areas from new media and information technologies, artificial and machine intelligence, Hawaiian resurgence, geoengineering, to national security, space exploration, participatory governance design, and sustainable agriculture and development. We are capable of providing issue-specific consultation, and creating and running futures design workshops.

All funding for the Center’s activities has been generated by clients requesting our work or through extramural grants obtained by members of the Center, such as the Carnegie Corporation, the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, the US Fulbright Program, and the National Science Foundation. The director and researchers receive no additional funding from the Hawai‘i state legislature beyond their salaries as professors. The director and faculty affiliates do not receive course releases or other workload benefits for their work in the Center, nor do any of the Center affiliates or students.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES SINCE OCTOBER 2020

- Over the course of 2021, the Futures Center has devoted significant time and resources to the development of an Intelligence Studies Certificate and Degree Track for Hawai‘i residents seeking employment in the growing intelligence and national security sector. Activities have included preparations for an Intelligence Community Centers for Academic Excellence (IC CAE) grant to provide funding for curriculum development; working with the Intelligence Mentoring Pilot program connecting UH undergraduates with leaders in the field of intelligence; developing syllabi and course offerings for the study of national intelligence; and working with partners Indo-Pacific Command and The Hawai‘i Defense Alliance to develop a program that benefits the state of Hawai‘i.
- In March 2021, the Center served as a discussant and outside reviewer for a commissioned report for the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Department of Defense future use of Artificial Intelligence in crisis decision-making. Activities included meeting with and discussing ongoing research with the project head and providing feedback on possible futures and challenges to AI integration in decision-making organizations.
- In June 2021, the Center provided support and presentations for the North Shore Sustainable Community Plan (NSSCP). The project facilitated community education and feedback on

efforts to adapt to climate change and other pressing infrastructure needs on the north shore of O'ahu. Meetings included planning divisions with several state agencies as well as an extended virtual workshop with members of the community.

- The Center continues to provide supervision and guidance to over thirty graduate students in the pursuit of their MA and PhD degrees. Many of the students work for state offices, lead civil society organizations, or serve in the armed forces. The Futures Center works very hard to accommodate non-traditional students in need of further education who cannot leave their vital positions in state and national government service.

FUTURES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE OF HAWAI'I

Over the past year, the Futures Center has been part of a number of planning events for COVID response as well as planning for post-pandemic futures, climate change futures, and national security futures. These discussions have been at the city, state, national, and international scale. The following statewide recommendations are gleaned from those meetings with an eye to what makes Hawai'i a distinctive living and policy environment.

These recommendations are along three major sectors for which the Futures Center has cultivated its strengths in research and collaboration. The three areas are: environment, economy, and security. We are always available to the Governor's office and Legislature to discuss and conduct research about these recommendations, or other areas of concern.

Environment: Through the Center's work with the North Shore community, it is clear that not all residents of Hawai'i feel equally prepared to adapt to the changing environment. Concerns were expressed about the long term viability of transportation infrastructure and sustainable tourism for the North Shore. Our international research suggests that the state of Hawai'i ought to develop contingency plans for rapid and unexpected climate and non-climate related changes to the environment. Existing planning horizons may be accurate but there is a need to develop contingencies for climate related inundation as well as disruptions to food supply, clean water, energy production, and sewage treatment on five and ten year horizons rather than twenty and thirty year horizons. The gap between disaster management and long term planning is closing faster than many have predicted. While there is some hope for averting runaway warming as the U.S. rejoins the international climate change effort, there is little chance of avoiding significant disruptions in the next five to ten years. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on climate modification suggests that Hawai'i and the Pacific region may face significant consequences from artificial efforts to remove CO₂ and cool the planet. Unlike the mainland, our state needs to prepare to adapt to consequences of successfully preventing global warming as well as the failure to prevent it.

Economy and Workforce Development: COVID has made apparent how vulnerable the Hawai'i economy is to disruptions in travel and leisure. While mitigation strategies have been effective at resuscitating this economy, the long term sustainability of the tourism economy is questionable and even possibly detrimental to a thriving Hawai'i. In addition to the possibility of further disruptions from COVID, the worsening geopolitical situation could disrupt travel as well as supply chains to Hawai'i. Investing in onsite manufacturing, sustainable agriculture and food production, as well as the capacity for repair and building essential hi-tech infrastructure should be a high priority for the state. Opportunities for land restoration and traditional forms of

agriculture are not just opportunities for cultural renewal, they also provide the possibility of independence and security during turbulent times.

Furthermore Hawai'i already finds itself in the middle of a generation-defining international gambit between the U.S. and China. While we are part of the U.S., we do not bear the risks of miscalculation and war equally with the continental states. It is essential that Hawai'i residents be able to serve in critical decision-making roles in state and national government to influence the policies that will determine our fate. The Hawaiian economy will increasingly be populated with defense-related contractors and jobs. Hawai'i residents need the educational opportunities to be prepared to fill those jobs so that the changes to the economy and the region reflect local interests and perspectives, not just the interests of those living thousands of miles away.

Security: The Futures Center's work this year with Indo-Pacific Command as well as international security partners around the world further confirms that the defense sector of the U.S. sees itself in a competitive and antagonistic relationship with China and North Korea.

At the same time, the U.S. alliance system that currently defines the security order for the Pacific is under heavy strain. Possible futures include a significant buildup of military force in and around Hawai'i. Some possible futures could find Hawai'i again as the halfway point between two warring states. The role of the U.S. military in Hawai'i and the civil defense of our state will face many challenges in the next two decades.

Furthermore, the public would greatly benefit from more opportunities to discuss the future of geopolitics and the consequences for the State of Hawai'i. Public fora on these questions beyond mandatory community meetings for military planning are essential to democratic accountability. The perspectives of Hawai'i residents are not often included in the formulation of grand strategy in Washington D.C. However, Hawai'i will be the implementation of grand strategy for the foreseeable future. Given the unprecedented nature of these changes, new institutions may be required.

We recommend folding in geopolitical scenarios and changes with state and local planning on disruptions such as climate change. Given the similar necessities for preparation regarding infrastructure, preparedness, and resilience, city and state planners may need to consider how to integrate geopolitical disruption into the images of the futures.

As always, the Center is happy to facilitate those opportunities for education and new thinking where the Governor or legislature finds it appropriate.

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