

# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM REPORT



REPORT TO THE 2023 LEGISLATURE

Report on Pamantasan Council Systemwide Efforts  
to Improve the Status of Filipino Americans  
at the University of Hawai'i

SCR 132 (2022)

December 2022

# **Pamantasan Council Systemwide Efforts to Improve the Status of Filipino Americans at the University of Hawai'i**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report was produced in response to Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 132, "Requesting the University of Hawaii to Report on the Pamantasan Council's Systemwide Efforts to Improve the Status of Filipinos at the University of Hawaii," which was adopted by the state legislature in May 2022. The University of Hawai'i Pamantasan Council is a systemwide organization that seeks to enhance the representation and status of Filipino American students, staff and faculty throughout the UH system. In Tagalog, *pamantasan* can be translated as higher education. The council was established in 1988 to address one of the key recommendations of the UH Task Force on Filipinos, which was created by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs the previous year.

The UH Pamantasan Council has served as an organized means for Filipino Americans in the University system to work together on problems and issues of shared concern. Despite the lack of any designated staff at any UH institution, it has been able to organize various activities, including an annual conference. A full-time faculty member to serve as the director of the Pamantasan Council and for another as the council coordinator can greatly enhance the academic success and status of Filipino Americans in the UH system.

The sections of the report address the specific requests in SCR 132, which states that the report "include information regarding the 2019 appropriation; resource and budgetary needs; recommendations on curriculum development; and representation and success of students, faculty, and staff."

### **Outcomes from 2019 Appropriation to the Pamantasan Council**

In 2019, the state legislature allocated \$155,000 to the University of Hawai'i for two full-time, temporary positions for the Pamantasan Council for two fiscal years, and Governor Ige signed Senate Bill 1418 into law as Act 266. However, due to the hiring freeze as a result of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020, the appropriated funds were used instead for three primary purposes: online courses offered by Maui College and Leeward Community College; curriculum development in Filipino studies; and hiring of temporary staff for particular tasks for the council.

Beginning in spring 2020, Maui College hired a lecturer to teach four online sections of Ilokano 101 and 102 in three consecutive semesters to almost eighty students, including those at other UH institutions where Ilokano language courses are not available. The appropriated funds were also used to employ a lecturer to offer online Philippine Studies courses at Leeward Community College and to other community college students. A Filipino American studies specialist in the Ethnic Studies department at UH Mānoa was hired to develop a course module for the Filipino Studies 107 course so that it can be taught by UH community college instructors. Thus, all of the appropriated funds were productively used to enhance the academic success of Filipino Americans in the UH system.

### **Representation and Success of Students, Faculty and Staff**

Filipino Americans continue to be underrepresented as undergraduate students in the UH system (14.1 percent) in comparison to their proportion of public school students

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(23.7 percent) in Hawai'i, among which they are the largest ethnic group. Filipino American undergraduates have their highest percentage representation at Maui College (25.3 percent) and UH West O'ahu (22.3 percent). However, they persist in being considerably represented below parity at UH Mānoa (10.8 percent) and UH Hilo (6.2 percent). Among graduate students, Filipino Americans are especially underrepresented at only 5.4 percent of such students at UH Mānoa.

At the UH community colleges, Filipino Americans (17.8 percent) are significantly underrepresented compared to their percentage of Hawai'i public school students. They have their greatest representation at Leeward (21.7 percent) and Honolulu (17.5 percent) Community Colleges. Filipino Americans who seek higher education in Hawai'i primarily enroll in the UH community colleges; however, sufficient transfer to the UH four-year universities continues to be an issue of concern.

Despite their underrepresentation as undergraduates, Filipino Americans have attained remarkable academic success as first-time freshmen (FTF), students who enter college directly after graduating from high school. Filipino American FTF have four-year and six-year graduation rates that are higher than the overall rates for their entering cohorts at all three UH four-year institutions. At UH Mānoa, after four years of matriculation, the graduation rate of the fall 2017 beginning cohort of Filipino American FTF (41.7 percent) exceeded the rate of that entire cohort at the university (39.7 percent).

Regarding faculty, Filipino Americans are especially underrepresented as instructional faculty throughout the UH system, particularly among those who are tenured or tenure track. In fall 2021, their total number was only sixty-nine or 4.2 percent of all such faculty in the system. At UH Mānoa, Filipino American tenured or tenure-track instructional faculty numbered just twenty-two (2.5 percent) and had similarly very low representation at UH Hilo (6 faculty, 3.8 percent), UH West O'ahu (4 faculty, 5.3 percent), and the UH community colleges (37 faculty, 6.7 percent). The critical need to increase the number of Filipino American faculty must be resolved because it is a problem of long standing.

Among administrators, at UH Mānoa only two Filipino Americans (the interim Assistant Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and the interim Dean of the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene) hold an upper-level administrative position. At UH West O'ahu, administrators of Filipino descent include the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, while at Hawai'i Community College, the Chancellor, the interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs are of Filipino ancestry. However, at UH Hilo and the other community colleges, no Filipino Americans are high-level administrators.

### **Resource and Budgetary Needs**

Funds are requested for two full-time equivalent (FTE) tenure-track faculty positions to serve as administrative staff for the Pamantasan Council. One position will be for a faculty specialist, who will serve as the director of the Pamantasan Council and will be based at the Office of Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity at UH Mānoa. The primary duties of the director include leading the council by working with the council representatives at each UH campus, developing and planning council activities, seeking funding for those activities, and issuing annual reports on the academic progress of Filipino American students, staff and faculty in the UH system.

The other requested position is for a faculty specialist, who will serve as the coordinator of the Pamantasan Council and will be based at Maui College. The principal responsibilities of the coordinator include planning the annual Pamantasan conference by collaborating with the representatives of the UH institution where it will be held, developing and implementing council activities at Maui College, and maintaining the social media presence of the council.

Funds are also requested to re-establish an FTE tenure-track instructional faculty position at Leeward Community College to serve as the coordinator of its Philippine Studies academic subject certificate program. The duties of this position include coordinating the “hub and spokes” model for the certificate with Pamantasan Council representatives at the other community colleges, developing and teaching courses in the program, and advising current and prospective program students.

## **Recommendations for Curriculum Development**

At the K-12 level, as the largest group of public school students in Hawai‘i, Filipino Americans need to see themselves reflected in their education. Their history, culture and perspectives are largely absent from the state Department of Education (DOE) K-12 standards, courses and curriculum. The only Filipino-focused courses provided by the DOE are in world languages—Filipino and Ilokano—but are rarely taught. Thus, Filipino content should be required in education standards and in social studies courses, and Philippine language courses need to be offered at high schools with considerable Filipino American enrollment.

In the UH system, more courses on Filipino American historical and contemporary experiences in Hawai‘i should be developed and offered at the UH community colleges, UH Hilo and UH West O‘ahu. Filipino Americans at those institutions and in their surrounding communities should be reflected in the curriculum so that students can learn more about their cultural heritage, historical contributions and experiences, and contemporary status and issues in Hawai‘i. Consequently, additional full-time instructional faculty need to be hired at the UH institutions with significant Filipino American enrollment to develop and offer courses, conduct research, publish materials, and provide community service to Filipino Americans and others in Hawai‘i.

## **Conclusion: Enhancing Filipino American Success at the University and Meeting State Goals for Access and Inclusion**

The report clearly establishes the urgent need for the state legislature to support the long-term efforts of the UH Pamantasan Council and the University of Hawai‘i to foster the academic success of Filipino Americans in the UH system. Filipino Americans continue to be underrepresented as students, staff and faculty at the UH institutions. Maui College, Leeward Community College and UH West O‘ahu are the only campuses where Filipino American students are represented above or at parity with their percentage of Hawai‘i public school students. To address these persisting issues, since the 1970s, Filipino Americans have sought to enhance their status and representation in the UH system by organizing student services and academic programs.

Since it was established in 1988, the UH Pamantasan Council as a systemwide organization has led and supported those and other efforts and demonstrated an impressive record of achievement in developing initiatives to advance educational opportunities for Filipino Americans at the University. At this point, the council requires full-time administrative staff, including a director and a coordinator, in order to continue its work enhancing Filipino American academic success in the UH system and Hawai‘i in general.

The University of Hawai‘i, through the Office of Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity at UH Mānoa and the Pamantasan Council, offers its assistance, expertise and resources to the state legislature toward the implementation of the recommendations stated herein.

**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PAMANTASAN COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Amy Agbayani**, UH Mānoa, Emeritus

**Wayne Agurian**, Maui College

**Jeanne Batallones**, Hawai'i Community College

**Leon Florendo**, Leeward Community College

**Erica Balbag Gerard**, Honolulu Community College

**Pua Larson**, Kaua'i Community College

**Shane Payba**, Maui College

**Christine Quemuel**, UH Mānoa

**Marnelli Joy Ulep**, UH West O'ahu

**Leighton Vila**, Windward Community College