



Board of Regents <bor@hawaii.edu>

September 6 Testimony

James Shon <jshon@hawaii.edu>
To: Board of Regents <bor@hawaii.edu>

Sat, Sep 1, 2018 at 9:47 AM

Please find attached HEPC Testimony for your Committee on Academic and Student Affairs

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HAWAII EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

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HAWAI‘I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

Testimony to UH Board of Regents September 6, 2018

Prepared by Jim Shon, Ph.D. Director, HEPC

BOARD OF REGENTS COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Date: Thursday, September 6, 2018

Time: 9:15 am

Place: University of Hawaii Technology Building 1st Floor Conference Room 105A/B2520
Correa Road Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96822

RE Agenda Item IV A 1.

Members of the Board,

HEPC appreciates the brief discussion by the Board at the August 16 meeting regarding the importance of civic education. Please see Appendix A for our remarks at that time. HEPC notes, however, that none of this month's agendas contain any elements relating to civic education, including the creation of a working committee on the subject, or even taking immediate steps to explore ways to increase civic education on campuses.

HEPC proposes that at the very least, your Committee on Academic and Student Affairs include in its Goals and Objectives review of the UH Mission Statement in terms of student civic education and engagement.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE UH SYSTEM?

HEPC has reviewed the current mission statement, and while it contains many lofty and worthy goals, still has no mention of any sense of an obligation to contribute to our civic life. Because of our Sunshine law, it is too late for the Board to take any action in September. However, HEPC offers the following suggested amendment to the Mission in the hope that it might be placed on a future agenda not only for discussion but for action. See the underlined section for our initial suggestion.

“UH Mission

The primary mission of the University of Hawaii is to provide environments in which faculty and students can discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that will help ensure the survival of the present and future generations with improvement in the quality of life.

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In carrying out that mission it is the basic purpose of the University of Hawaii to afford all qualified people of Hawaii an equal opportunity for quality college and university education at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

The University recognizes its unique role in contributing to a our democracy through its academic requirements, extra curricular opportunities, policy centers, and campus culture in educating knowledgeable citizens to fully participate in the civic life of our community.

At the only provider of public higher education in Hawaii, the University embraces its unique responsibilities to the indigenous people of Hawaii and to Hawaii's indigenous language and culture. To fulfill this responsibility, the University ensures active support for the participation of Native Hawaiians at the University and support vigorous programs of study and support for the Hawaiian language, history and culture.

UH Vision

The university espouses a vision grounded in the Hawaiian concept of ahupua'a, which include reverence for the land and sharing and diverse but finite resources for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this testimony.

APPENDIX A. HEPC TESTIMONY ON AUGUST 16, 2018.

HEPC proposes including in your next budget funding for a significant Civic Education and Engagement Initiative. The recent Primary election indicating less than 40% voter turnout should be an indication of a serious crisis in our democracy.

As a public Land Grant and Sea Grant institution, HEPC respectfully poses the following questions:

1. Does UH have ANY obligation in preparing students for full and knowledgeable participation in our democracy?
2. If the answer is, either explicitly or implicitly, a yes, how many students are required to take courses on our constitution, our government, and how to make sense of our Hawaii and National issues? How many are required to participate in service learning?
3. How does the UH system at all campuses currently compare with other public institutions in terms of civic education?

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TRENDS

This 2016 article on Inside Higher Education reviewed a recent trend.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/05/10/colleges-placing-increasing-importance-programs-promoting-civic-engagement>

Quoting from the report:

“Starting this fall [2016], California State University at Los Angeles students must take two courses in civic learning as part of their general education requirements.

A combination of workshops, service learning and problem-solving assignments, the courses are designed, the university said, to encourage students to use what they’ve learned at Cal State to create solutions to real-world issues by working with local nonprofit organizations. Faculty will develop assignments and projects using an online module created by the [Association of College and University Educators](#).

When the requirement kicks in next year, the university will join a quickly growing number of institutions emphasizing civic engagement in their curricula.

“There is this whole discussion of a perceived decline in civic participation in our society,” Michael Willard, faculty director for the university’s Office of Service Learning, said. **“What’s happening across higher education is a recognition that we need to fulfill our historic mission of preparing students to be citizens through new forms of engagement in civil society. That returns to the foundational purpose of higher education. Education has more value in addition to training students for a profession. A student should leave the university with the understanding that they can use the knowledge and skills of their degree for a career and for the public good. Those things are not mutually exclusive.”**

I have spoken with a number of students recently, at both Manoa and community colleges. They do not report any concerted effort to require or encourage civic knowledge. Public policy courses are often optional in our focused programs and colleges. We do not ask faculty to give even extra credit if students can demonstrate engagement, or even evidence they voted.

I would like to propose that your budget include at least an initial commitment to start the process of taking this seriously. Perhaps your Public Policy Center. Certainly HEPC is willing to help. We are about to ask our citizens to approve a consequential constitutional

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amendment on funding public education, and even more significant, to decide if Hawaii should have another Constitutional Convention. Are we ready? Can you say for sure the students (and faculty) in the UH system are knowledgeable enough to be interested, let alone make an informed decision?

I challenge you to Google this issue, you may find nearly 2 million links relating to this movement. Are we part of the movement?

Thank you for considering this testimony.

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