

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

Your Name (required) *

Helen Nishimoto

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

hschoneb@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

OTHER

OTHER (Please describe) *

Call to request an audit at Hawaii Community College

Your Position (required) *

Comments Only

Your Testimony/Comments

Here is the ASUH Hawai'i Community College Student Government Testimony

Your Testimony (pdf or word)

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April 15, 2021

Due to the specific issues and concerns raised by students, faculty, and staff, ASUH Hawai'i Community College Student Government strongly recommends that a special report also be submitted along with the annual performance evaluations of Chancellor Rachel Solemsaas and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Dorinna Cortez. The following highlighted concerns need to be specifically addressed in their performance evaluations:

- Overall lack of leadership, communication, and planning. Administrators have paralyzed innovation and creativity because of the “campus of fear” environment that they have created. Faculty, staff and students are afraid to speak up about anything that might be perceived as offensive to administrators. Administrators create committees composed of hand-picked members, so that they can say they were inclusive of the campus constituency, but their hand-picked will only follow the administrator’s agenda, not what’s best for the college and students.
- Censorship of all information that is sent out to students. ASUH Hawai'i Community College must get approval for everything that is sent to students. There is no such thing as “freedom of speech” at Hawai'i Community College.
- Unnecessary delays in financial aid processing which affected all student awardees, especially in the 2020 Fall semester. ASUH Hawai'i Community College drafted a memo to administration requesting that they not proceed with the changes and to expedite students' awards (Resolution 2020-1). They have proceeded with the changes, which are far from complete, and the situation looks worse for Financial Aid processing for Fall 2021.
- Mismanagement of CARES I, II, and III -- the account balances are always changing and the amount being awarded to students keeps growing smaller and smaller.
- Against the system recommendation, students were dismissed and disenrolled from their fall classes because of inadequate academic progress (their courses were moved to online mid semester, which was a recipe for failure for many). There was no warning and there were no efforts to reach out to students. Despite ASUH Student Government's request to reenroll them and to reach out to them, the VCSA (Ms. Cortez) did not do this and defended the disenrollment. This lack of clear communication with the students in question caused approximately a 10% reduction in the Fall 2020 enrollment.
- Mismanagement of budgetary deficit. The administration has never provided an accurate accounting of the budget situation to faculty, staff, and students. Just prior to the pandemic, they presented what they said was a balanced budget, when, in reality, we fell over \$700,000 short of meeting our reserves.
- Gross negligence to fill time-sensitive faculty and staff positions that were left vacant because administration wanted to hire temporary staff to assist with their “pet projects.” All of the vacant positions, as well as their temporary project staff positions were then swept. Because of their lack of ability to listen to knowledgeable faculty and staff, everyone has to work harder to fill in all of the gaps in services.

- Inappropriate control of student fees. Students are not able to make decisions about how their fees are being spent. The decisions on expenditures are made by one person, the VCSA, Ms. Cortez. In addition, administration will not allow for access to any of the student fees accounts: Student Government, Student Activities, and Student Publications.
- The Student Activities Council (SAC) was disbanded by the administration in 2014, and despite numerous requests to allow Student Government to reinstate a SAC, no action was taken by administration. The VCSA was told two years ago to activate the council, yet she is still saying that it could take years to activate a council! Though the Student Publications Board was recently activated, she still controls the expenditures and planted her own student employees within the council.
- EEO violations in hiring of regular and student employees. There is a clear hiring practice that has been perpetrated against individuals of Caucasian, African Americans, and Indian ethnicity. There is also discrimination against anyone the clique closely aligned to administrators decides doesn't belong there. Student Services has only one Caucasian in the entire department. There is an endemic, cronyistic and nepotistic practice of hiring friends and family, while Caucasian, African American (no employees hired), Indian, and other marginalized groups of students and employees feel the racism.
- Student complaints and lack of services due to inadequate supervision of staff, setting clear guidelines, and a lack of planning, organization, and leadership. Student services are severely lacking because no one wants to work and the VCSA. Ms. Cortez has enabled her staff to get paid, "work from home", and at the same time, students are not being served (no return calls, emails, etc.).
- Reports that the VCSA, Ms. Cortez has used her position and campus resources for the personal gain of herself, family, and friends.
- While students in general feel that faculty is doing a good job during the COVID-19 pandemic, our administration and student services have performed abysmally in what can only be rated as subpar. The recent KAIAC survey substantiates this claim.

Moreover, the current 360 Evaluation system is seriously flawed at Hawai'i Community College. Administrators ask the same people- that they know will say positive things about them- and year after year, they are evaluated by these same few people. The true campus sentiment is never tapped. It is highly recommended that the entire campus constituency- faculty, staff, and student government leaders- participate in the evaluation process.

It is important that a fair and objective evaluation take place. As in the case of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, this may require an independent and reputable third party evaluator.

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Support for an Audit of Hawai'i Community College

Your Position (required) *

Comments Only

Your Testimony/Comments

Please open the attached for the ASUH Student Government Testimony

Your Testimony (pdf or word)
[Request Clarification of Administrative Waiver.pdf](#) (213.6 kB)

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UNIVERSITY of HAWAII®
HAWAII
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



ASUH-HawCC

2020-2021

“Student Voice, Student Power”

May 6, 2021

To University of Hawai'i Board of Regents

It has come to ASUH Hawai'i Community College Student Government's attention that all students enrolled in the spring 2021 semester received an email stating there was a "HOLD" place on our accounts, which prevents us from being able to register for and drop classes, apply for graduation diploma, receive an official transcript, etc. We were told it was a mistake and was rectified the following Monday. The problem is that the accounting that we received just doesn't seem quite right and we are wondering if you could help us sort this out. Below is an example of the Student E-Statement that all students received from the STAR Team early in January 2021 and again on April 16, 2021. According to the statement, an "Administrative Waiver" was given to students and this was attached to the Spring 2021 receipts. We would like to request specifically what does this waiver apply for? Can we get more clarification and contextual information pertaining to the "Administrative Waiver?"

Student Account (Spring 2021)

CLASSES

CAMPUS	CRN	SUBJ	C R 3
0.7348882021-04-16	15:30:04.0563872		

TERM CHARGES/RETURNS*

Registration Tuition		\$393.00
Other Student Fees		\$30.00
Registration Fees		\$8.00
0.2321722021-04-16	15:30:04.0720122	

TERM PAYMENTS/CREDITS*

Credit Card Payment		\$401.00
Administrative Waiver		\$30.00
0.7930442021-04-16	15:30:04.0720122	

Term Charges	\$431.00
Term Payments	\$431.00
Amount due	\$0.00