

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF REGENTS SPECIAL MEETING**  
**MARCH 7, 2024**

A video recording of this meeting may be viewed at the Board of Regents website as follows:

[Meeting Video](#)

**NOTE:** This meeting is a continuation of the February 16, 2024, special board meeting which took place at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Information for **all items on this agenda, with the exception of Agenda Item IV.B (in part), IV.C, and IV.D** can be found here [Minutes of the February 16, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board](#).

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair Gabriel Lee called the meeting to order at 12:56 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa, Information Technology Building, 1st Floor Conference Room 105A/B, 2520 Correa Road, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822, with regents participating from various locations.

Quorum (10): Acting Chair Gabriel Lee; Vice-Chair Ernest Wilson; Regent Neil Abercrombie; Regent Lauren Akitake; Regent William Haning; Regent Wayne Higaki; Regent Laurel Loo; Regent Abigail Mawae; Regent Diane Paloma; and Regent Laurie Tochiki.

Excused (1): Board vacancy due to the resignation of Chair Alapaki Nahale-a.

Others in attendance: President David Lassner; Vice President (VP) for Administration Jan Gouveia; VP for Academic Strategy Debora Halbert; VP for Community Colleges Erika Lacro; VP for Legal Affairs/UH General Counsel Carrie Okinaga; VP for Research and Innovation Vassilis Syrmos; VP for Budget and Finance/Chief Financial Officer Kalbert Young; UH-Mānoa (UHM) Provost Michael Bruno; UH-West O'ahu Chancellor Maenette Benham; Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents (Board Secretary) Yvonne Lau; and others as noted.

Acting Chair Lee announced that this meeting was a continuation of the February 16, 2024, special board meeting which took place at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. As Agenda Item IV.A was previously discussed and disposed of and Agenda Item IV.B. was discussed, in part, the meeting will carry on with discussions on IV.B and continue through IV.C. and IV.D. He also noted that public testimony would be accepted for the unfinished items.

*(For items II, IV.A, and IV.B. (in part), please see the Minutes of the February 16, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board.)*

**II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 7, 2023, AND JANUARY 4, 2024 SPECIAL MEETINGS**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Board Secretary Lau announced that the Board Office received written comments from Regent Emeritus Kelli Acopan, Erin Centeio on behalf of the members of the Presidential Search Advisory Group (PSAG), the Kapi'olani Community College Staff Council, Jim Shon, Ashley Maynard, Susan Pope, Marguerite Butler, and Brian Piotrowski regarding the presidential selection process and PSAG.

Late written comments on the presidential selection process and PSAG were received from the Association of Emeritus Regents, Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i (ASUH) President-elect Bronson Azama, Ismael "Ish" Salameh, Mariko Quinn, and Kyla-Marie Kauhahao.

ASUH President-elect Bronson Azama and Marguerite Butler also provided oral comments on the presidential selection process and PSAG.

Written testimony may be viewed at the Board of Regents website as follows:

[Written Testimony Received](#)

[Late Written Testimony Received](#)

Acting Chair Lee announced that regents were unable to complete their executive session discussions with legal counsel initiated during the February 16, 2024, special board meeting regarding matters pertaining to the board's powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities within the context of the PSAG's relationship with the board pursuant to Section 92-5(a)(4), Hawai'i Revised Statutes. As such, he requested a motion to convene in executive session to continue these discussions.

Regent Haning moved to convene in executive session for the purposes noted by Acting Chair Lee. The motion was seconded by Regent Abercrombie, and the motion carried with all members present voting in the affirmative.

**V. EXECUTIVE SESSION (closed to the public)**

The meeting recessed at 1:03 p.m.

Acting Chair Lee called the meeting back to order at 2:30 p.m. and announced that the board met in executive session to discuss the matters as noted in the abovementioned motion.

**IV. AGENDA ITEMS**

**A. Update on Presidential Search – Selection of Search Firm and Presidential Search Survey**

**B. Board Approval of PSAG Members**

Deliberations resumed on the proposed membership of the PSAG initially presented at the February 16, 2024, special meeting of the board, with several regents acknowledging the efforts of the core PSAG members in fashioning a composition of the PSAG in such a manner so as to incorporate as many views and perspectives as possible within the confines of a 12-member entity. While some regents noted the existence of personal trepidations about some of the individuals recommended for inclusion on the PSAG, they expressed their support for and trust in the process.

Although concerns were raised with respect to the ambiguity of confidentiality and conflicts of interest standards to which PSAG members would be held, Acting Chair Lee noted that this will be addressed via documentation requirements and enforced by the board.

Regent Loo moved to accept the PSAG membership as proposed subject to all PSAG members completing confidentiality agreements as prepared by staff and securing of an ethics opinion, seconded by Vice-Chair Wilson, and the motion carried with all members present voting in the affirmative.

### **C. Discussion and Potential Action on Regent Liaisons to the PSAG**

Acting Chair Lee noted the request made by the core members of the PSAG to have himself and Vice-Chair Wilson continue to serve as the board's liaisons to the group. However, in light of his current position as acting Chair, he proposed his removal from consideration for this task.

Regent Akitake moved to have Vice-Chair Wilson and Regent Tochiki serve as the board's liaisons to the PSAG, seconded by Vice-Chair Wilson, and the motion carried with all members present voting in the affirmative.

### **D. Discussion and Potential Action on Assignment of Tasks to the PSAG**

Jarret KC Leong, Co-Chair of the UH Staff Council and PSAG, Erin Centeio, Co-Chair of the All Campus Council of Faculty Senate Chairs and Co-Chair of the PSAG, provided background information on the creation of the PSAG, stressed the importance of the PSAG's involvement in the selection of the next UH president, and presented information on recommended responsibilities for the group as formulated by the core members of the PSAG including collaborative consultation with the search firm selected by the board; establishment of clear and comprehensive criteria for selecting the next university president in partnership with the search firm; partaking in the candidate evaluation process; engagement with various university stakeholders; recommendation of finalists for the position; ensuring process transparency via, among other things, the holding of town halls and listening sessions; and participation in campus interviews with finalists.

Regents engaged in extensive discussions on the aforementioned recommendations noting their close alignment to the advisory group tasks outlined in the final report from the Presidential Search Process Permitted Interaction Group. Regents also shared their thoughts on the role the PSAG should play in the presidential selection process; the responsibilities of the selected search firm; the necessity of holding town halls and

listening sessions early on in the process as well as the party accountable for conducting these activities; the development of job criteria and a position description; the creation of a short list of finalists along with the entity or entities responsible for developing and culling the list; the need or desire for a ranked list of finalists to be established; and the provision of consolidated presidential search survey data to the PSAG and search firm.

Regent Tochiki asked whether the board's liaisons to the PSAG would attend the town halls and listening sessions. Acting Chair Lee expressed his belief that board liaisons should not attend the town halls and listening sessions.

Regent Akitake inquired as to how the campus interview process will work and requested Mr. Leong and Ms. Centeio to share their opinions on the PSAG's involvement in this matter. Board Secretary Lau responded that the search firm will assist in arranging the campus interviews for all of the finalists which, in past presidential searches, took place on every campus. The board will also have the opportunity to conduct its own interviews of the finalists. Information obtained from all of the completed interviews, along with any other pertinent materials available, would then be used by the board to make the final selection of an individual to serve as the next UH President. Ms. Centeio expressed her belief that the PSAG should be involved in the campus interviews.

Regent Mawae questioned whether Mr. Leong and Ms. Centeio envisioned all of the members of the PSAG being involved in the campus interviews. Ms. Centeio replied that, at minimum, at least one member of the PSAG should be involved in the process, although ideally, all of the PSAG members would take part in the campus interviews.

Conversations ensued on the extent of the PSAG's potential involvement in the campus interview process for finalists and the entity's participation in the presidential selection process overall with some regents communicating their discomfort with discussing this issue given that the entire membership of the PSAG was formulated just a few minutes ago and only two members from the group were present at this time.

Regent Abercrombie underscored the significance of the PSAG not being subject to the constrictions of Hawai'i's open meetings law which will allow it to conduct business in a more effective and efficient manner.

Regent Akitake encouraged the PSAG to explain how the entity arrived at certain conclusions when presenting proposals, recommendations, and other information regarding the presidential search to the board, which will go a long way towards building trust among regents with respect to the work conducted by the group.

Taking into consideration all of the conversations thus far, Acting Chair Lee suggested regents give some thought to what was mentioned at today's meeting and the topic be continued for discussion at the next meeting. He also stated that WittKeiffer, the firm selected to provide search services for the next president of the university, will be giving a presentation to the committee of the whole on March 21, 2024. He also mentioned WittKeiffer intended to meet with the PSAG on March 22 and requested board staff to forward the proposal from WittKeiffer to the PSAG.

Prior to adjournment, Regent Abercrombie gave a short statement about his desire, capacity, and commitment to interact positively with fellow regents, the university administration, the faculty, staff, and students of the University of Hawai'i System, and members of the public who support the goals and realities of the university. He also expressed his deep regret for any actions that appeared threatening or may have caused feelings of intimidation among those whom he interacted with at previous board meetings and pledged to work to create and sustain a positive, deliberate climate and atmosphere in all board activities.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Acting Chair Lee adjourned the meeting at 3:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Yvonne Lau  
Executive Administrator and Secretary  
of the Board of Regents