

September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014

Dear Regents,

Last week the Manoa Faculty Senate passed two important resolutions--one of which explicitly censured President Lassner, and the other of which implicitly declared a loss of confidence in the Board of Regents itself, and offered recommendations for changes in the BoR's procedures--changes that would allow Manoa to move ahead without interference in the difficult task of reorienting itself in a period of seriously diminishing resources. The former resolution, I have to say, was controversial. Many Manoa senators thought it did not go far enough. A substantial minority thought it inappropriate altogether. But the **latter** resolution, the one directed at the BoR itself, and the significance of which seems to have been entirely lost sight of by the local media, was passed **unanimously**—by 55 faculty senators. No one who voted for that resolution was in any doubt as to its importance or its utter lack of precedent.

The Manoa faculty are angry at the System President for removing from the position of Chancellor of Manoa someone who communicated with faculty and students, and who understood their concerns, like no Chancellor that I can recall in the twenty-five years that I have taught at UHM. Moreover, the reasons the System President has offered for Tom Apple's removal simply do not persuade the majority of Manoa faculty. Under Tom Apple, Manoa's financial reserves were falling dramatically, and he was taking no steps to halt the process. **This** was the official reason given for his dismissal. Quite aside from the fact that much of the decline in reserves can readily be explained in terms of factors over which Chancellor Apple had no control—rising electricity costs, rising faculty salaries, the ongoing deficit run by athletics, the transfer in the summer of 2013 by the legislature of seven million dollars from Manoa to West Oahu and the community colleges, the failure of the legislature to cover the costs of the return this summer to faculty of the ten million dollars in salary that had been “borrowed” from them several years ago—quite aside from this, it is simply not true that Chancellor Apple was “doing nothing” to address the financial crisis. On the contrary, what he **was** doing—opening an indispensable conversation about how our declining financial resources needed to be distributed across the various units at Manoa in order to ensure the future welfare of the university **as a whole**—was highly unpopular in certain quarters. And **that**, we almost all believe, was why he was fired. (The Cancer Center imbroglio was, and is, merely the most high profile instance of one unit at Manoa getting a disproportionate share of support, and attention, while other equally crucial units are slowly starved of resources.)

The Manoa faculty are angry at President Lassner for removing Tom Apple for no good reason, and for offering spurious reasons to justify this removal. But the Manoa faculty are just as angry at the Board of Regents for supporting the System President in this move. The Manoa faculty are not privy to what is said in BoR executive session, or in private conversations and phone calls between regents. Thus we cannot **know** **that** the Board of Regents actually called for Chancellor Apple's dismissal, but we have heard a great deal to suggest that some senior regents did not merely support President Lassner's decision, but that they **instructed** him in the matter. We cannot know this; but we can and do believe

this. And it undermines our confidence in the Board of Regents to think that they are willing to jeopardize the welfare of UH Manoa by engaging in such actions.

UH Manoa faces a daunting financial future. Tuition cannot go on rising forever. Student numbers are now declining and are unlikely to return any time soon to the peak enrollment we enjoyed in recent years. And for the past decade or so the state's contribution to Manoa in terms of G-funds has declined, and seems likely to continue to, at best, remain where it now is. In the meantime, costs keep rising. Manoa **simply must** engage in a painful and distressing examination of how our resources should be used to sustain, not just a medical school, and a cancer center, and a division one athletics program, but a well-rounded **university**. Whether you realize it or not, Tom Apple was beginning that process of self-examination on the part of the university, and most of us believe that he paid the price for doing what desperately had to be done. (He was not always the most politically adept administrator, but he was an enormously courageous one.) That conversation which Chancellor Apple tried to get started needs to be allowed to occur—for the welfare of the university as a whole. Politicians, regents, and even system presidents, need to recognize that the Manoa Chancellor is the person primarily entrusted to safeguard the overall welfare of the state's **one** research university. His efforts to sustain the **whole** university must not be undermined, as Tom Apple's were, by individuals concerned only to protect or enhance the share of the financial pie currently enjoyed by their pet academic or research unit.

The second of those two resolutions passed by the Manoa Faculty Senate last week included a request that the Board of Regents, as a whole, meet with the Manoa Faculty Senate Executive Committee to discuss how we might go about restoring faculty confidence in the BoR, which I think it is safe to say is currently at an all-time low. As the Chair of the Senate Executive Committee, I would like now to reiterate that invitation, and to express my sincere hope that the Board of Regents will meet with us.

Cordially,

Ron Bontekoe, Chair

Manoa Faculty Senate