The University of Hawaii at Manoa is broken and is fast approaching a crisis point, if indeed it has not already reached it. The Faculty Senate resolutions of September 17, 2014 highlighting the egregious action of President Lassner in firing our chancellor, Tom Apple, and deep-seated concerns relating to the BoR’s actions and procedures were intended as a wakeup call to the Board. While the professional schools and research institutes that contribute to the overall mission of Manoa are vitally important, their inherent financial instability has destabilized the core functions of our State’s flagship university. Deferred maintenance of the Manoa campus, improper siphoning of undergraduate tuition money, simply because it is “unrestricted”, unrealistic promises, and the bankrupting of core academic units can no longer be relied upon to fund these multiple endeavors. The professional schools and research institutes were created with good intentions but with flawed or nonexistent business plans. Subsequent mismanagement and a sense of entitlement in some of these units have led the University down a path that has no clear or safe exit. The time has come to cut our losses, not double down on sucker bets in the hope that the result will be different the next time. The latter is clearly the definition of insanity.

It is vital that you, as the governing body of this institution, work with faculty, students, and concerned community members to right the ship by interacting with these groups that are on the front lines of education and research to determine the priorities of the University and the changes that are necessary to reverse the inequity and decline that we currently face. We desperately need a Board of Regents that does not manipulate and manage Manoa for ends that are at odds with the fundamental missions of a research university. We need a Board that is responsive to the input of faculty and students. We need to see administrative interference of the UH System in the internal affairs of Manoa minimized through downsizing of System offices. We need, as soon as possible, the appointment of a permanent leader for Manoa with direct access to the Board and with appropriate authority to oversee its operation. The Board also needs to repudiate the process by which a President, three days into the job, feels entitled to fire a Chancellor without significant input from faculty and students or a compelling reason that can be articulated. By your silence, you have in fact endorsed this process. While you all may agree with the end that was achieved, the means cannot be justified.

Please do not disregard our resolutions, as has so often occurred in the past. They were not passed lightly and sent to you to be ignored. If you disagree with us, say so and state your reasons. If you oppose the AAUP guidelines on the hiring and firing of a chief university leader, let us know and tell us what guidelines you prefer and where they can be found. If the higher education of Hawaii’s elite young adults and future leaders is a lesser priority, please let us know and convey to all what is more important in your view. You are the body that sets the policies and overall mission for the University. We are the ones who carry out that mission. We, as faculty, tend to think that we are doing it for the benefit of students, however, if you all perceive the mission to be the support of powerful deans, administrators, and directors as they create their fiefdoms, let us know and we will deal with it. It is vitally important for the future of the University of Hawaii at Manoa that the Board shares a common vision with its faculty that all can support. We hope we have been clear on the principles on which we stand and we look forward to a similar public declaration of principles by which the Board operates.

Robert V. Cooney, PhD

Vice Chair, Manoa Faculty Senate