Statement for Board of Regents

A J Adamson, September 2021

I am forming this statement by answering a series of questions received via Dr. G Chun. All of the responses are my own personal opinions, not intended to represent either Gemini Observatory, the National Science Foundation or AURA (Gemini’s funding and management agencies respectively) or the other Maunakea Observatories.

Do you see your position/seat on the MKMB principally as a representative of all of the observatories, the Gemini Observatory, or as an individual residing on the Big Island?

When I put my name into the hat, it was with the first of the three options in mind - partly because of the way it had been described to me. I certainly would not represent one Observatory to the exclusion of the others; that wouldn’t serve the University well in any case. There are significant differences between the observatories on Maunakea. I believe I understand some of those differences, and also the similarities in our operational challenges, well enough to helpfully inform MKMB.

As to the third option, the Board could surely find more remarkable and representative residents. That said, I have lived on Hawaii Island since 1998, with a 1.5 year break while I was based in Chile early in my time at Gemini Observatory. But my experience dates back to my first observing run at the then newly-commissioned UKIRT in 1980, a visit repeated many times through the late 1980s and 1990s. So besides owing most of my professional life to Maunakea and the people who work on the mountain, I do have a 40-year perspective on changes and development of both the island and its astronomical science.

What are your views about the future of astronomy on Maunakea and what role do the observatories have in that future?

My (scientific) view is that as long as ground-based astronomy is being done anywhere in the world, it should also be done from Maunakea, which truly is unique. This places an onus on the observatories and their funding agencies to continue to develop their facilities and operations and reflect the privilege of working on the mountain via world-leading science results.

My (personal) view is that the observatories have a chance, working with the University and the community, to become a role model for carrying out ethical, collaborative and engaged scientific studies in the midst of a culturally unique and environmentally sensitive landscape. I do hope to play a part in helping that to happen.
Do you believe that the University should continue to manage and be the principal steward of the use of MK for astronomy research?

I am open minded on this question, if only because I don’t have direct experience of any other management model. But I’d add that in my experience of operating two observatories under its auspices, UH/CMS(OMKM) did well at the task of managing the astronomy activities and keeping the mountain safe.

Do you favor more local Big Island control in the management affairs of MK?

Yes, but local management needs to ensure alignment with wider governance - e.g. University, County, State.

Given the public criticism of the University’s management of MK in the past, do you have any suggestions or thoughts about how UH can improve in this area?

The creation of CMS (OMKM) seems to me to be on the right track. My only thought is that it’s important to maximize its ability to address, and be seen to address, previous areas of shortfall. The University should fully staff CMS, fund it well and make good hiring decisions.

What would you suggest the University do to better balance the various interests the community have towards Maunakea (e.g., Native Hawaiian traditional and customary uses, environmental impacts, visitor, employee, visitor education, access to MK for tourism and recreational uses, and astronomy)?

This is a really difficult question, and I’m not sure that all of what might be most helpful is necessarily in the University’s power or ability to fund. But Hale Pōhaku/VIS seems to me to be important in heading off misuse/disrespect of the mountain.

A personal view is that visitors could and should carry away a better understanding of the cultural and environmental aspects of Maunakea than many currently do. Broadening the use of HP to achieve this would contribute to a better balance. For example, I would welcome an orientation similar in spirit to what is given to visitors to Hanauma bay on Oahu. This may be difficult to achieve but that orientation does make its point and I’m sure has some impact on people’s behaviour when they are in that environment. Maunakea is surely of greater significance and deserves something similar. With the greater part of the visits coming from organized tours, there must be some way to accommodate something like this.

What has your involvement with Gemini/MKO community engagement been since you have been at Gemini?

I would like to extend this backwards by ten years. Both at UKIRT from 1998 to 2010 and at Gemini from 2010 to 2019, my job’s focus was always on improving the internal working of each observatory, and that’s where the great majority of my time has gone. But I have always taken opportunities to take part in community outreach. I have attended many Onizuka Days, Astrodays and Journey Through the Universe events, and I’ve acquitted myself well in front of
classes of five year olds and less well in front of classes of teenagers. I’ve also taken part in judging science fairs in local schools (and one history fair, which was out of my comfort zone but very instructive).

Most of the above work was focused on STEM, which I believe is crucial to providing pathways into science and engineering for kids growing up on the island, and which I felt qualified to engage in because of my background in academia. In the last two years, my position at Gemini shifted from overseeing operations across both Gemini sites (the other is in Chile) to a dedicated focus on Hawaii, along with becoming the local point of contact for Gemini. One of my first undertakings in the new position was to agree to take on helping to put together an apprenticeship program for mechanical technicians at the MKOs, working with the staff at the Community College. We’re not done yet (COVID has held this up significantly) but when we complete it and (hopefully) get approval, there will be a well defined apprenticeship program leading to a career path in technical work at observatories both here and elsewhere. If we can get this to work, I’ll see it as having made a good contribution.
Chairman Moore and members of the BOR.

Attached is my written testimony expressing concerns with the report and recommendations of the Permitted Interaction Group on Tenure, made public Friday evening (9/10/21) in the agenda and materials for the Sept. 16 BoR meeting.

Please also register me to provide oral testimony, via zoom, in the public comment period of your 9/16/21 meeting - and share with me the details of how to do so.

Mahalo for all that you do in support of the UH,
Brian

PIG Concerns BT.docx
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To: Randolph G. Moore, Chairman of the UH BoR
Fr: Brian Taylor
Dean of SOEST
Re: Concerns regarding the report to the BoR of the “PIG on Tenure”, made public 9/10/21
In the agenda and materials for the Sept. 16 meeting.

I will limit my comments to matters that relate to research at UH Manoa. In that regard, both the process and the product of the task force are deeply flawed in my view.

As to process, the faculty were represented by the UHPA Director (with his dissenting opinion). There was no presentation nor representation from the faculty Senate. The one Dean chosen for the task force leads a College whose tenured and tenure-track faculty are 98% 9-month instructional, with one S-faculty and no R-faculty – hardly representative of the issues under consideration nor of many other units at UH Manoa. The task force included no ORU Directors. Research had only a single representative (the interim VCR) and, though she has consistently championed the research enterprise, she was a lone voice. One should seriously question the fairness and validity of the report on this basis alone.

Paraphrasing from the report, I agree that the faculty are of paramount importance as they play a critical role in the quality and effectiveness of meeting the primary mission of the UH to “discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom, and values that will help ensure the survival of present and future generations with improvement in the quality of life”. To that end, the awarding of faculty tenure is “for the primary purpose of protecting academic freedom”.

The UH has a well-articulated 10-campus system, with seven Community Colleges, two four-year campuses, and the flagship Research-1 campus at Manoa, the mission and priorities of each of which are distinct. UH Manoa is distinguished in being a research-intensive campus, and home to the UH Professional Schools and also to the Land-Sea-Space grant extension programs.

Just as the campuses are specialized, so too are the Schools and Colleges, as well as the faculty, at UH Manoa. This is a good thing, not to be dismantled lightly.

Hawaii Statesmen (Inouye, Burns, Ariyoshi) and the Legislatures with which they worked had a clear vision that education and the research enterprise would provide career opportunities to lift their children and grandchildren out of the plantation and service industries. They created Organized Research Units (ORUs) in statute (e.g., HNEI in 1974, during the Arab oil embargo), devised a specialized faculty classification system (including I, R and S faculty), and invested in local research facilities of world renown (e.g., IfA, HIMB, Cancer Center). This has allowed UH, and UH Manoa specifically, to “punch well above its weight”.

SOEST is the premier research and graduate education program at UH. The faculty in SOEST, which includes five BOR-designated ORU’s (HIGP, HIMB, HNEI, PBRC, SeaGrant), have averaged over $100M
per year in extramural funding for the last dozen years (i.e., ~30% of the UH Manoa total), despite serial budget cuts and restrictions and associated downsizing of the faculty at greater than the rate of inflation. Together with the IFA, Cancer Center and JABSOM, we account for over half the total extramural funding and indirect cost return (RTRF) to UH Manoa. We conduct education and research that matters on the aina – the coupled Earth-Ocean-Atmosphere-Biosphere system that supports and sustains us. But this exceptional productivity is highly leveraged and dependent on the base State/UH investment, and will not be sustained without prioritized reinvestment in research as well as teaching faculty.

Consonant with the dissenting opinion of Christian Fern (UHPA), the recommendations of the PIG on Tenure, if adopted by the BoR, would do irreparable harm to future recruitment and retention of faculty in SOEST and all ORUs.

Whereas it was fair for the PIG to consider, as charged, whether tenure is aligned with the mission and priorities of the University, it was a travesty to narrow that focus to ensure that tenure is only awarded to faculty “that will fulfil the enrollment requirements and strategic growth priorities”. Which is to say that the University has high-performing units, notably ORUs, whose primary mission is research and graduate education rather than enrollment growth. And which is not to say that R faculty should not teach – all SOEST R-faculty do teach, including at the undergraduate level, but not to the extent of the instructional faculty. The proposed elimination of the I and R faculty designations to be replaced with a simple "F" faculty with similar/identical job descriptions/duties and responsibilities will not serve well the ORUs whose BoR-approved missions are quite different from instructional Departments and faculty.

Therefore, it is my recommendation that the proposed RP 9.201 section B2 be revised to read: Before recruitment for tenure-track positions occurs, and before award of tenure, the administration shall ensure that:
(1) the position fulfills THE CURRENT MISSION AND priorities for the university and the State;
(2) there are no qualified faculty in other units that are available and that could meet the needs of the hiring unit;
(3) the balance of tenure-track and other faculty is appropriate given enrollment, mission, and accreditation standards; and
(4) the unit is successful and relevant in contributing to the institutional mission and goals.
This would, for example, allow tenure of R-faculty in ORU’s, consistent with their mission.

Thus, it is my further recommendation that the proposed RP 9.202 allow for and retain the distinction between I and R faculty. This would also keep the same designation of R-faculty for those in non-tenure track positions.

I further note that presently there is extant a hybrid category, namely 11-month “I” faculty (formerly “I-R” faculty), whose importance to research-intensive units (Departments and ORUs) can not be overstated. We no longer live in an agrarian society, with summer time off needed to reap the harvest. Likewise, it is ludicrous to retain a 3-month summer off-duty period, between and determined by, the instructional semesters, when faculty conduct research and serve the community all year round. Their salary and benefits (e.g., retirement) should not be limited by an off-duty period (though the State-paid fraction of their salary and fringe may be, as it is in SOEST).

Under the cloak of tenure considerations, the PIG on Tenure recommended changes to the faculty classification system that mostly concern instructional workload, not academic freedom.
In that regard, and to further elaborate, in the following I share with you my correspondence with Senator Kim from 2/8/21, when this matter first arose.

Aloha Senator Kim,

Paul Nachtigall shared your response to his concerns regarding S.B. 1328, relating to academic tenure at the UH.

You state correctly that “The traditional purpose of academic tenure is to protect professors’ freedom of speech” but then imply that it “can become an issue with instructional faculty” (only). In fact, the same tenure protections are warranted for research and specialist faculty to ensure full and open discussion of controversial issues, without retribution, whether in the classroom, in publications, or in the media. Let me list a baker’s dozen topics that quickly come to mind about which tenured Research or Specialist faculty at UHM profess, aspects of which have been controversial in our State:

- Geothermal energy
- Genetic engineering and breeding (e.g., Rainbow Papaya, Taro)
- Economic forecasting (e.g., UHERO)
- Invasive species (e.g., Superferry, deer on Maui, bio-control)
- Infectious diseases, immunology & pathogen studies in biolevel-3/4 facilities
- Behavioral health (substance use/mental health, homelessness, criminal justice)
- Fresh water resources (e.g., Red Hill tank storage of petroleum)
- Sea-level rise, shoreline setbacks, and building/seawall permits
- Coral reef conservation (e.g., new sunscreen laws)
- Fisheries (e.g., marine protected areas, no-take zones, reef fish for aquaria)
- Shark & ray behavior (e.g., S.B. 504)
- Wastewater treatment (e.g., west Maui Supreme Court case)
- Astronomy (e.g., TMT)

You then state that “I agree with you that Research Faculty are a huge State economic engine and backbone for any first-rate University. That they teach most of the graduate students, bring in most of the grants (that provide a huge overhead to support the University business), and provide much of the academic honor that makes the University of Hawaii great. Research faculty take on the teaching of the graduate students and have a primary goal of commitment to student achievement and success. I believe this is true at all universities.”, with which I readily concur.

You go on to say that “Yet in comparing the University of Hawaii’s tenure policy to peer institutions, ours is the only university that awards tenure to R faculty. Researchers at the top research universities elsewhere in the nation acquire funding through competitive grants that accounts for 40-80 percent of their salaries. They are classified as non-tenure track faculty. Also, it is my understanding that 133 of the 310 R faculty at UH are already currently not tenured or on the tenure track.”

This is also correct, but only because other universities do not have the same classification of faculty. Uniquely, UH recognized and valued specialization, and designated faculty with differing levels of teaching, research and service (the three fundamentals of all faculty) with different letter designations: Instructor (I), Researcher (R), and Specialist (S) - and other types as well (Medicine, M; Law, B; Extension, A; Library, L; etc). The numbers of each are allocated proportional to their varying roles in the university and for the State. Thus, research institutes (ORUs) created in statute, such as HNEI, HIGP, IfA and the Cancer Center, for example, are allocated a limited number of State R faculty permanent positions – and
such are the (177, your number) positions that UHM recruits as tenure-track positions (by advertisement and offer letter contract). But there is another class of R faculty, that are not tenure-track (133, your number), as you point out. These are the temporary faculty positions that are largely supported on extramural funds, as at most other universities. Many of these faculty are attracted to UHM by its location, facilities, and the permanent R-faculty who have established areas of research excellence. They greatly leverage the State’s investment in, and productivity of, the permanent R-faculty, who themselves typically raise ~20% of their salaries extramurally, and also teach.

Let me share the example of the ongoing work of the Hawaii Natural Energy Institute (HNEI), one of the ORUs within SOEST. The State’s investment in the six tenured or tenure-track faculty in HNEI (4-R, 2-S) is repaid many times over. Over the past decade, HNEI’s faculty (6 permanent, and 19 non-tenure track supported exclusively on extramural funding), have raised well over $100 million from non-State sources to address energy issues of importance to the State. As a result of the expertise that has been assembled, these faculty are able to advise the PUC and HSEO on renewable energy matters, as documented in their annual report to the Legislature (as per HRS 304A-1891), and support various initiatives or requests from the Legislature. A current example is S.B. 243. As introduced this session, part one of this bill asked the State Energy Office of DBEDT to develop a strategic plan for how to achieve a “zero emissions clean economy” and part two was for HNEI to conduct a feasibility analysis of the State’s ability to meet our 100% energy goals. My understanding is that it passed out of Senate committee with both parts intact, but with HNEI responsible for both parts. Whether, in the end, HNEI addresses one or both parts, the independent analysis allowed by the tenure of their faculty ensures that the Legislature will be presented with an objective analysis on which to base future energy policy decisions.

A University and its faculty have three fundamental roles: to create new knowledge, to store and apply existing knowledge, and to teach that knowledge to successive generations of students. To sustain UHM’s standing as the only Research-1 university in the State, the outstanding higher educational and community service opportunities that presents, and the high-tech economic engine it provides, warrants continued investment by the Legislature on behalf of the public in tenured R-, S-, and I-faculty.

Respectfully yours,
Brian Taylor
Dean of SOEST
The public of this state is not served well by certain regents and legislators making reckless remarks and engaging in baseless calumny regarding the UH system. Such members of the political class seem determined to turn us into an educational backwater in a world whose major economies are each defined by the expansion of higher education, which is to say, by an investment in their people.

UH—and especially UH Mānoa as the single R1 University in the system—is constantly suffering by being evaluated in narrow and provincial terms, which is to say that UH and UHM are repeatedly compared—by regents, legislators, and sadly sometimes some of its own administrators—only to other state institutions and bureaucracies in Hawaii, instead of being evaluated in the only way that anyone evaluates them in real life: namely, in terms of other institutions of higher learning in the USA and the world at large.

Higher education is a global market in which governments play a determining role. Universities are intrinsically valuable to the societies in which they thrive—as is generally recognized in the civilized world—and, when they maintain some respectability and prestige, they can also form a major vehicle of international exchange and diplomacy. But international standards are high and uncompromising because other countries, particularly those in Asia that value education in a profound way, have not convinced themselves that they "cannot afford" academic institutions of the highest caliber. In fact they have decided just the opposite. UHM has an international reputation built over decades, which still gives us a seat at this table, but it can be destroyed overnight.

Whenever UH is actually judged in real life by real people making decisions about whether or not to study or work here, the only meaningful standard is other universities, and any major decisions about UH/UHM should be made by people who have acquired substantial knowledge and expertise regarding international academic practices and standards, so that they can make informed and enlightened decisions on behalf of the public they represent. This means understanding something about what a university is and how it works.

The public's resources are being wasted right now by politicians asking questions that academic administrators and politicians in East Asia, for example, would consider to have already been answered many times over by history: "does a major research university contribute to society such that it should be invested in?, "are tenure and academic freedom necessary for university professors to fulfill the mission of a major university?, etc. These are the wrong questions in the sense that they have already been answered...by our own history no less! Asia looks at our history, i.e. what the expansion of higher education did for the USA in the post-war period--they know our history better than we do--and they can see that the USA is the model, but not today's USA, rather they look to the USA of yesterday. If academic administrators in Seoul or Hong Kong knew what our regents and legislators are talking about right now, they would scratch their heads and probably feel sorry for us.

It is a pathetic state of affairs that this is where the debate is right now in Hawaii. Universities are fundamental elements of all the best public systems in the world, and it is no accident that in many parts of Asia for example, where conversations about development are driven by realism rather than crass posturing, we find higher education invested in and expanded on a scale that we can barely imagine in the USA today. Ironically, Asia is only following the example of what the USA did in the postwar period, the era that built the American nation as the preeminent global power, known for something people called the "American dream": a situation of social mobility and rising living standards, in which higher education was expanded on an unprecedented scale.

Keeping the conversation in the gutter with puerile questions about whether professors really do any work and whether any of the basic norms of a major university have any value, means that we are spinning our wheels while Seoul National University, the University of Hong Kong, the University of Tokyo, etc. are actually driving somewhere at lightning speed on those kinds of wheels. We are eating their dust while staring at our navels and patting ourselves on the back. It is pathetic and unforgivable. We are fortunate that no one in a major Asian city has any idea what we are talking about right now in Honolulu regarding higher education because if they did, we would lose all respect, and if we continue in this way, we seriously deserve to lose that respect.

The fact is that Hawaii is very lucky to have a strong public university system, built in an earlier, more constructive era of US history, and it is a matter of great shame that our irresponsible politicians would fail to appreciate its value. Our people
cannot afford to have uninformed, posturing politicians hijacking the public system that gives their children some measure of social mobility. The people of Hawaii absolutely deserve a great public university system, and it is a system that does a glorious job of serving the public by any measure, despite the endless obscene attacks on it from our opportunistic legislators and regents.

The stereotype of privileged professors running amok is just a ruse to trick the people of this state into having their public provisions stripped from them. UHM already bleeds talented young faculty because its salaries are uncompetitive and its working conditions are substandard on a good day. We should be having conversations about how to make it as globally competitive as we can reasonably hope, not how to turn it into the academic equivalent of a Walmart or a McDonalds.

Should these islands be nothing more than tourist accommodations and military bases?! If so, then UH, and especially UHM, is one pillar of a society that is potentially more than the sum of military bases and hotels. We should learn from our Asia-Pacific neighbors about how to build an advanced society that we can be proud of just as they have learned from our own history!

A major university system allows Hawaii to engage in intellectual and cultural exchanges with societies and civilizations from which we now have so much to learn.

The UH system is at a crossroads. Its dedicated and talented faculty, as well as those of its administrators with vision and perspective, are more than capable of taking it into the future and giving us something we can all be proud of. A handful of legislators and regents think the public doesn't deserve what they, their parents, and grandparents could expect from it. Our legislators and regents are the ones who need to be reined in, and reminded of their responsibility. Their education is obviously incomplete. The model of lifelong learning and cultivation that the university offers is one that our politicians and regents could really benefit from, since in today's complex and changing world, one has to go on learning constantly or else face rapid irrelevance.

I find the attacks made on the tenure system—not to mention other similar tiresome rants from vested interests with no shame, scruple, or virtue to speak of—just that: irrelevant. The question is whether we as the public will stand by and watch ourselves become as irrelevant as the cant of our political class. I sincerely hope not because, despite the frankly dishonorable state of affairs we find ourselves in right now, Hawaii has something very beautiful in its culture and way of life to share with the world, and it is the younger generation that stands to offer the most. The young people of Hawaii deserve every educational resource that can be made available to them so that they can represent us internationally and merit the global respect and admiration that will put us on the map. To those of you that don't understand and don't want to understand, please step aside and make room for your children.

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Jesse Ross Knutson PhD
Associate Professor of Sanskrit Language and Literature
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It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation. Compliance carries with it a sense of futility for the individual and is associated with the idea that nothing matters and that life is not worth living. In a tantalizing way many individuals have experienced just enough creative living to recognize that for most of their time they are living uncreatively, as if caught up in the creativity of someone else, or of a machine.-- Donald Winnicott, Playing and Reality
Honorable Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii,

I, along with my Associate Deans, respectfully submit the attached testimony in opposition to the Sept. 16, 2021 BOR agenda item VIII.A. Report of the Tenure Permitted Interaction Group.

Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Mahalo,

Nick

Nicholas Comerford

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NOTE: The email Dean@ctahr.hawaii.edu is no longer being used. Please use CTAHRDn@hawaii.edu for emails to Dean Nicholas Comerford.
Board of Regents’ Meeting - Sept. 16, 2021

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources: Testimony in Opposition to BOR Agenda Item VIII.A. Report of the Tenure Permitted Interaction Group (PIG)

In 1862 President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Land Grant College Act, which established the land-grant college system for the study of Agriculture, Mechanical Arts and Military Science. It was the first time that the U.S. sought to educate the “industrial class”. It gave a pathway for the average person (mostly living on farms) to gain a college education.

In 1887, Congress passed the Hatch Act that established the Agricultural Experiment Station in the Colleges of Agriculture at land-grant universities.

In 1893 Queen Liliʻuokalani established the Bureau of Forestry and Agriculture in Hawaiʻi; which was followed by the establishment of the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts of the Territory of Hawaiʻi in 1907 which became the original land-grant college in Hawaiʻi. The College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts led to the beginning of the University of Hawaiʻi (UH) System.

In 1914, Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act that established the Cooperative Extension Service in the Colleges of Agriculture at land-grant universities. This act established a Service that was responsible for the instruction/education of the general populous. The outcome of this Act was the presence and role of Extension Agents and Extension Specialists.

This short history of agriculture research and education is to provide a basis for my comments that follow regarding the PIG task group and its recommendation regarding tenure and faculty classification from both historical, practical, and functional perspectives.

From the PIG report we submit that there appears to be a misunderstanding of the role of Extension at UH, the Land Grant University, and the faculty members that assume that role. An Extension Specialist is a position found nationwide, and is a faculty member at the UH at Mānoa (UHM) that has a dual role – that as extension educator and researcher. This faculty member engages in instruction, just not in the traditional in-class instruction. Yet, it is some of the most impactful education done by a land-grant university. It is impactful because it is in communities, our communities, directly applicable to the problems of immediate necessity and often quickly put into practice. An Extension Agent engages in local communities’ instruction and may be involved in applied research.
The impact of Extension education is obvious in the numbers that represent activity in the 2020 COVID year:

1. Over 2 million direct and indirect educational contacts with citizens of the state
2. Over 700 workshops provided
3. Over 8,000 individuals changed how they managed their farms or their lives.

We would call to the attention of the PIG what is on the first page of the UHM Accreditation Report which describes how central the Extension land-grant education role is to UHM and the state of Hawai‘i:

“As a land grant university with a tripartite mission—education, research, and extension—UH Mānoa excels in community service and engagement across all Hawaiian Islands. The cooperative extension programs, in particular the activities of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources and Sea Grant extend information to the people, businesses, and families of the state, improving lives and livelihoods, as well as care for the ‘āina, which in the Hawaiian ethos is one and the same thing as family. Cross-sectoral extension programs overlap with the varied community services and engaged learning that many of our non-extension academic units and faculty provide to local communities and businesses.”

The sole purpose of tenure is to provide university faculty with the protection of academic freedom. Extension faculty deserve the same protection, if not more, than that provided to faculty in the PIG report. For example, Specialists and Agents deal with complex issues such as use of chemicals to control invasive pests. They deal with topics related to genetically engineered organisms. Both of these are hot button issues in local communities. It is not unreasonable to expect some elements of a community to object to any approach the faculty take; and call for their dismissal. Tenure assures any faculty member that they can express their opinions based on the current science without fear of reprisals. Extension faculty meet tenure and promotion criteria over a 5-6 year trial period; just like any other faculty member.

The idea inherent in the PIG report is that “direct instruction” is the only valued instruction at a land-grant university. This is a foreign concept to us. The idea that protection of academic freedom is only necessary for those engaged in ‘direct instruction’ is not only strange, but also against the basic idea of a land-grant university.

While I have referenced UHM as a land-grant university, we suspect that you are not completely aware of how unique UHM is. UHM is a Carnegie R-1 Research University,
which is the highest classification attainable. Yet, it is also a space-grant and sea-grant university. Of the nearly 4,000 degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the U.S.; there are only 13 that have attained that status. UHM, being the smallest of the group, takes its place alongside the likes of Cornell University, University of Illinois, University of Florida and Rutgers.

UHM has attained that status through its ability to attract the best faculty. We agree that the classification of faculty is in need of change, however, the changes suggested have three problems. First, it reduces the national competitiveness of UHM for faculty. The best Extension Specialists will look to go somewhere else. We already have difficulty attracting and retaining top faculty due to the high cost of living. Second, the resolution does not solve any problems. Tenure does not assure a forever job. We have a process within the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) to remove faculty who do not maintain a strong commitment to the job. Third, you could have addressed the apparent problem you saw with tenure, by simply requiring an annual report/evaluation. It is well within the CBA rules and would allow any problem that arises to be addressed sooner and more often.

In summary, the current proposal diminishes the land-grant promise by not recognizing the value of Extension as an educational system that is the pride of all land-grants. It does not protect the academic freedom of all faculty. In this divisive world, academic freedom needs to be protected. It does not solve a real problem with tenure, nor does it explain what problem it is solving. Last, it does not do the easy fix to post-tenure review that is within the scope of the CBA. We suspect you will find that this proposal is also on very insecure legal footing.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to voice our opinions.

Sincerely,

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

Nicholas Comerford, Dean and Director
Ania Wieczorek, Interim Associate Dean for Academic and Student Services
Walter Bowen, Associate Dean for Research
Jeff Goodwin, Interim Associate Dean for Extension
Testimony
1 message

Kim Holland <kholland@hawaii.edu>  To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Tue, Sep 14, 2021 at 1:12 PM

Attached please find testimony relating to the PIG on Tenure. I am opposed to these findings that were developed by an unrepresentative committee.

Thank you

Kim Holland
Researcher, HIMB

BOR testimony Holland.pdf
280K
Dear Board Members

I am a tenured Researcher with 40 years of uninterrupted service with the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

It is a fallacy to believe that only Instructional faculty need the protections of academic freedom conferred by tenure. As a marine biologist specializing in fisheries issues, I have had many occasions where I have had to convey scientific results to the public or to legislators that ran counter to perceived or popular wisdom. My perspectives were based on objective, rigorous science of the type at which the University of Hawaii excels – in part because of its emphasis on supporting dedicated, first-rate researchers. Tenure made me confident that I could present my scientific perspectives without fear of repercussions.

It would be a critical mistake to make sweeping changes to the current faculty designations at UH and to remove the ability of all classes of faculty to obtain tenure. There already exists a robust protocol for post-tenure review.

I endorse the perspectives expressed by Dean Brian Taylor.

Sincerely,

Kim Holland
Researcher, HIMB