



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

---

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
July 13, 2011 at 1:00 pm

by  
Rockne Freitas  
Vice President for Student Affairs and University/Community Relations  
University of Hawai'i

Chair Hanohano, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

It is my pleasure to present information to this committee on how the University of Hawai'i is addressing the needs of the Native Hawaiian.

The University strives to improve access to state higher education and the success of our Native Hawaiian students. In its Mission Statement, the University states clearly that it is committed to becoming a model indigenous-serving institution. It ensures the active participation of Native Hawaiians at the University and supports vigorous programs of study in Hawaiian language, history, and culture.

In 2008, we identified Native Hawaiian Educational Attainment as our first and most important strategic outcome. It is our goal to increase degree attainment of Native Hawaiians by 6 to 9 percent per year. We're pleased to report that every campus has met or exceeded this goal the past school year. HOW? UH has done intensive outreach in Hawaiian communities, through programs like Nā Pua No'eau. Since 2006 UH Native Hawaiian enrollment has doubled. In Fall 2010, there were 14,134 Native Hawaiians enrolled in the University of Hawai'i system, comprising 23.5% of the total enrollment. UH has also increased its financial aid access. Last year the UH system administered a total of \$257 million in financial aid, and about 20% of that - or \$57 million - went to Native Hawaiians. UH granted 250 tuition waivers and \$1.6 million to support Native Hawaiian students. At each campus there are additional programs that support Native Hawaiian students, such as remedial tutoring to increase grades. These programs not only raise Native Hawaiian achievement, they raise the achievement of all students.

At UH Mānoa the Ka Huli Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law focuses on education, research, scholarship, community outreach, and the preservation of invaluable historical, legal, traditional and customary materials. In addition, the Center supports Native Hawaiian students in the William S. Richardson School of Law. This enabled the Law School to enter into a partnership with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to develop a legal primer on iwi kupuna. When the primer is completed, the center will conduct workshops in Hawaiian communities throughout the state.

The Department of Native Hawaiian Health at the John A. Burns School of Medicine is developing culturally competent curriculum. The department also runs the 'Imi Ho'ola program, a post baccalaureate program aimed at increasing the number of Native Hawaiians entering into and graduating from John A. Burns School of Medicine. In research, the department has developed a study of the health disparities that disproportionately affect the Native Hawaiian population. We've implemented a program focused on reducing and eliminating diabetes-related disparities in Native Hawaiians. This involves activities such as conducting hypothesis-driven research, developing pilot studies, training new researchers and networking with Native

Hawaiian communities to disseminate research information. Examples of these studies include researching whether lomilomi (massage therapy) can reduce stress in Native Hawaiians with type 2 diabetes. This research reaches Native Hawaiians throughout the state of Hawai'i and the US continent.

At the Hawai'inuiakea School of Hawaiian Knowledge at UH Mānoa and Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at UH-Hilo, baccalaureate and graduate programs are offered. The two colleges lead the U.S. in creating a model indigenous language and culture program within a University system.

At UH Hilo, Hale Kuamo'o, the support and research arm of Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, is producing curriculum, media, and telecommunications services to reach its goal of expanding the Hawaiian language as a medium of communication in all aspects of our lives. The College also operates Hawaiian K-12 immersion schools on O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i Island. In 2008, the college graduated its first Ph.D candidate, the first indigenous language Ph.D. offered in the United States.

At UH-West O'ahu, a new campus will open in Fall 2012 in Kapolei. Its central location to the Leeward coast will allow it to serve the many Native Hawaiians living in that area. The college has hired personnel to work with Native Hawaiian students in innovative modalities like First Year Experience and provide other comprehensive support services like tutoring, use of computer labs, and financial aid assistance. UH West-O'ahu has seen a large growth in Native Hawaiian enrollment in the last 3 years.

In 2007, the UH Community Colleges in partnership with Kamehameha Schools and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs joined Achieving the Dream, a national initiative to address the higher education needs of underserved populations. In Hawai'i, that would naturally be Native Hawaiians. The Community Colleges articulated five goals to chart Native Hawaiian progress: improved success in remedial/developmental coursework; completion of "gatekeeper courses" or courses with high enrollment and low pass rates; retention; persistence; and graduation. Because of Achieving the Dream, the community college Native Hawaiian enrollment has doubled; financial aid access has increased from \$7 million to \$24 million; graduation has increased by 35%; and transfer rates to a four-year college have increased by 32%. While the University is proud of the work we have done, we know we can do better.

At each of the 10 campuses there are Native Hawaiian councils that advise each Chancellor on Native Hawaiian issues. The councils have developed and implemented programs that address Native Hawaiian success. Each council selects two representatives to sit on Puko'a Council, the Native Hawaiian advisory council to the University of Hawai'i President. Puko'a has developed initiatives that it would like to address at a system level. One such issue is the underrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in faculty and administrative positions at the University of Hawai'i. While the number of Native Hawaiian faculty has increased by 100%, Native Hawaiians still comprise just 7% of the faculty in the UH system. Puko'a has been a strong advocate for parity of UH faculty composition consistent with the Hawai'i populace.

Lastly, the President has recently tasked a steering committee to develop a plan to create a model indigenous serving institution within the university. The task force will create a plan and have it ready for presentation for next year's legislative session. The group has come up with three thematic areas: language preservation, leadership development, and community service.

The purpose of this testimony is to answer the question "what is the University of Hawai'i doing to support the Native Hawaiian community?" The answer: we are providing a supportive

higher education system that Native Hawaiians can thrive in; promoting and preserving Hawaiian language and culture; conducting research, development, and implementation of programs that address the needs of the Native Hawaiian community.

The University strives to improve access to public higher education and the overall success of our Native Hawaiian students. In its Mission Statement, the University states its unique commitment as an indigenous-serving institution. It ensures the active participation of Native Hawaiians at the University and supports vigorous programs of study for the Hawaiian language, history, and culture.

We appreciate the opportunity to share what the University of Hawai'i is doing to serve the Native Hawaiian community.