



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

## TESTIMONY

H.B. 3160 Making An Appropriation for the University of Hawaii

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Higher Education Committee

February 2, 2006

By

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Dean, School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene

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Mr. Chairman and members of the House Committee on Higher Education, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 3160 Making an Appropriation for the University of Hawai'i. You have my written testimony and in the interest of time, I will summarize and be available for questions.

House Bill 3160 has been developed to address the statewide shortage of nurses by presenting a System-wide response, including several University of Hawai'i campuses. I am here today to talk about that effort, however individual campuses can provide details for you when you hear from them over the coming weeks.

As you know, Hawai'i has a shortage of registered professional nurses. Today's nursing shortage is widely considered "different" than all previous shortages because it is the result not of market dynamics, but an unprecedented demographic shift towards an older population and an aging workforce. The population of Hawai'i is aging twice as fast as the rest of the country. By 2020, 1 out of every 4 people living in Hawai'i will be 60 years or older and 1 out of every 35 people will be age 85 years or older. Demand for health care and long-term care services will increase at the same time that the nursing workforce and faculties will be aging into retirement. By 2020, demand for RNs is expected to increase by 4,554 new full-time equivalent (FTE) positions as nearly 80 percent of today's workforce (8,397) nurses are expected to retire. Increasing numbers of RN vacancies, and vacancies that remain unfilled for extended periods, can be expected to leave fewer RNs available to provide care potentially undermining quality of care and access to care. The consequences for public health and safety will be significant.

Costs associated with out-of-state recruitment are significant to public and private healthcare institutions and while providing a short-term solution camouflage the core issue – public nursing educational programs are funded inadequately.

The School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene is the only nursing program in the state accredited by both the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. The first time pass rate for our graduates on the NCLEX, the national board exam, is consistently above

90%. And yet, we turn away more qualified nursing applicants than we accept because of inadequate funding for faculty positions. Prior to 2005-06, at Manoa, the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene admitted about 70 students a year to the undergraduate nursing program and one accelerated cohort of 10 students every 18 months. The 2005 Legislature, in your wisdom and concern for the community, provided the School additional faculty positions that enabled us to increase our admissions by 25%, the largest number of students admitted since the early 1990s.

The Fall 2005 student enrollment of 254 undergraduate nursing students includes 82 master's in nursing students, 34 doctoral nursing students, and 58 dental hygiene students. We are proud to say that our student body reflects the ethnic diversity and richness that is Hawai'i. At the undergraduate level, Filipino/a students make up 31% of the class followed by Japanese and Hawaiian students. Further, 20% report their ethnicity as mixed Asian and other. As salaries have risen, men are choosing nursing and our statistics support this national trend with men comprising almost 25% of students (an increase over the national average of 10-15%). Additionally, our students at UH Manoa represent Oahu and the neighbor island communities. As the School is expanding its efforts in distance education and web based formats to increase accessibility for students residing on the neighbor islands, student enrollments from those communities is increasing.

Hawai'i deserves the best and most competent nurses that we can educate. The School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene stands prepared and committed to ensuring that nursing education is current with national standards. As such, we benchmark our school with its peers on the mainland. Beyond preparing entry level nurses, we recognize the need to provide the graduate education to educate nurses to serve as leaders and patient advocates across acute, chronic and community health in urban and rural settings on all the islands. Further, we conduct research and contribute to the expanding body of knowledge required to provide culturally competent care in our multicultural state.

Specifically, the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene has developed a multi-faceted plan to increase the educational capacity for nursing that I detailed in my written testimony.

The first component is to increase the number of faculty and program support to admit additional students who desire to be nurses. Nursing faculty are the key to addressing Hawai'i's nursing shortage. In Fall 2005, we accepted the largest number of students to our Bachelor's program since the 1990s. However, the number of qualified students we turned away still outnumbered those we accepted. Despite our current approach to gradually increasing enrollment, studies indicate these numbers will not be sufficient to address the critical nursing shortage in the future. Increasing the school's position count and funding for faculty are mandatory to increase enrollment.

In addition, significant increases in enrollment require corresponding increases in student services, technical and coordination support. The 'Ike Ao Pono program increased the number and success of Native Hawaiian students significantly with 25 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island students graduating in 2004-05. Operationally, an adequate school administrative and support staff allows effective and efficient use of resources for non-instructional responsibilities and contribute to ensuring student success.

A second component of the plan is to expand enrollment in the graduate nursing program, both at the master's and doctoral level. Since nursing faculty are the key to addressing the shortage, qualified and sufficient numbers of nursing faculty are required to teach nursing students throughout the State. The average age of nursing faculty in Hawai'i is 49 years. Currently, 10% of our faculty are at or past retirement age and 16% will achieve retirement age within the next five years. The School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene at UH Manoa, the only public program preparing advanced practice nurses in the State, is committed to preparing nurses for future faculty roles, especially to teach in the UH Community Colleges where the impact of the faculty shortage is greatest. A Master's in nursing education track using distance learning and innovative teaching strategies will prepare more qualified educators. The advanced practice nursing program is targeted to increase nurses working in rural settings and is provided in a distance format to allow working nurses to stay in their home communities while enrolled in the program. The PhD in nursing program for nurses in rural settings was converted to an on-line format this past fall. Preliminary review of the program indicates the model is successful. Expanding the PhD program would increase the number of doctorally prepared nurses for faculty roles, not only with the knowledge, but with first hand experience of using advanced technologies in nursing education.

Third, we plan to address the faculty shortage with salary adjustments to achieve parity with the market rate for nurses in hospitals and faculty in private universities. Nursing faculty salaries are considerably lower than that of nurses in Hawai'i's healthcare industry (approximately \$20,000 less). While nursing is recognized as a high demand discipline at UH Manoa and there is a mechanism to provide for salary adjustments, funding is required to provide parity. This initiative is urged not just for UH Manoa but across all campuses, for recruitment and retention of faculty. In 2003, the UH Systemwide Nursing Consortium, comprised of nursing program directors throughout UH, came to agreement about nursing faculty salaries by rank so that a consistent approach to the shortage could be implemented. The main obstacle to alleviating this dilemma is funding of nursing programs for faculty salaries.

The fourth component is to build on our current distance and simulation learning, while maintaining programs of high quality and rigor. The school was one of the first to use distance technology at the UH Manoa for program outreach to the neighbor islands. The PhD in nursing program was the first program at UH Manoa to receive WASC approval to offer doctoral education in an on-line format. The school's recently purchased and dedicated SimLab prepares

nursing students for their clinical experiences. Yet, our current infrastructure for distance and simulation learning can only provide limited access to students. We must ensure that our educational programs, teaching-learning environments, and teaching strategies keep pace with the rapidly changing clinical setting and that access is available to all students in our program. One time funding is needed to construct and equip a state-of-the art simulation teaching laboratory and to outfit classrooms with technology to expand web-based and distance learning to increase the number of students from the neighbor islands. The student's ability to meet the expectations of the health care profession are greatly enhanced by exposure to structured laboratory experiences designed to simulate the types of situations that they will encounter in the clinical environment. As nursing student enrollment is increased throughout the state, accessibility to these laboratory experiences become of greater importance due to the influx of students in clinical settings.

Fifth, is to plan for a designated physical facility to provide optimal educational experiences and for students to participate in inter-disciplinary education with other students in the health sciences. The growth and enhancement of nursing and dental hygiene educational programs at the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene has outpaced the school's physical plant and instructional technology resources. While already feeling the effects, space is an utmost concern for 2006-07 and beyond. As nursing enrollments increase, so will the need for these resources. Funding is required to conduct facility planning, site and operational determination, and other necessary tasks to facilitate expanding the school's physical facility to provide optimal educational experiences and for students to participate in cross-disciplinary education with other students in the health sciences.

The success of any one of the nursing program in the University is connected to the success of all our sister programs. Therefore, with the support of the Board of Regents and the Office of the President, we have made a commitment to develop a unified approach to nursing education. The Statewide Nursing Consortium is ready to move forward with the shared goals of increasing the number of nurses prepared to meet the changing health care needs of the people of Hawai'i, increase efficiency in educational preparation of nurses, and increase access to nursing education throughout the state. Funding allocations to all UH nursing programs are urged so that programs can increase enrollments statewide preparing students in the communities they will serve as nurses. Funding is needed at the UH System level for the Consortium to fully develop and implement its plan for a new model of nursing education.

The nursing shortage is of great concern and we are committed to addressing the state needs. In addition, dental hygiene education at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene has programmatic needs that beg to be addressed. Currently, it is the only baccalaureate dental hygiene program in the state and graduates 16 to 20 students annually. The dental hygiene clinic located at Hemenway Hall on the Manoa campus provides services to students, faculty and the community while giving students supervised

clinical practice experience. There is a great demand for dental hygienists in the community, especially in rural and underserved areas of the state. While there is potential to expand the dental hygiene program to meet needs of the State, the program must first be stabilized with positions and funding for additional dental hygiene faculty. Physical facilities for dental hygiene are in dire need of expansion and are included in the above plan designated by the School.

As Dean of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene, I appreciate our state policy maker's insightful and well-founded support. The University of Hawai'i Board of Regents, by way of the approved executive supplemental budget, has also indicated their strong support for nursing and dental hygiene education at the University of Hawai'i. HB 3160 bill provides continued support and a strategic public sector approach to addressing the nursing shortage by making an appropriation to the University of Hawai'i nursing and dental hygiene programs. We are in full support of this bill that makes an appropriation for items in the UH Supplemental Budget and designates an additional appropriation that will facilitate scaling up of efforts to address the nursing shortage and improve the health care of the people of Hawai'i. We salute your wisdom in responding to the needs of Oahu and the neighbor islands by significantly expanding all levels of nursing education throughout the UH system.

As recognized by the Economic Momentum Commission, economic development and sustainability go hand-in-hand with quality healthcare. Nursing workforce training is one of the most important issues facing the state. Investing in the University of Hawai'i benefits students, employers, and the overall state economy. The investment contained in this bill is aligned with future needs of the state. The School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa is committed to full partnership with the legislature in addressing the nursing workforce challenge. As recommended by the Commission, this bill is the first step of a "Rapid Response" nursing training program tailored to the economic needs of the communities throughout the state. By funding expansion of faculty prepared to teach, creating state of the art simulation and teaching facilities, and most critical, increasing the number of graduate nurses committed to working in Hawai'i, you are providing opportunities for the best and brightest of Hawai'i youth to receive a professional education. Subsequently, they can expect to obtain employment and earn a wage that will allow them to remain in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to take any questions.

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