



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

HB 3164: Relating to The University of Hawaii College of Arts and Sciences

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

February 2, 2006

by

Dr. Neal Smatresk
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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Chair Waters, we thank you for the chance to testify in favor of this thoughtful and important bill. You will have many chances this session to review legislation that is worthwhile and timely, but I believe you will have no better opportunity to hear legislation that is more urgently needed to support the hopes and aspirations of the young men and women of our state than this bill we have before us. This bill doesn't promise the sun and the moon. It is a simple request to help the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa provide critically needed instructional and student support services that have been eroded through years of budget cuts and a dramatic growth in our student populations. Since the fall of 2000, enrollment at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has grown by 3,670 students, an increase of 21% in 6 years. In the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, our largest undergraduate program, enrollment grew by 5,500 students or 55% while approximately 76 FTE faculty lines were lost, and over \$5,000,000 in base budget was lost from the four Colleges comprising the unit. While I am proud of how the units involved have stepped up to keep their instructional activities intact, the impact of these cuts has been severe and we no longer have the core academic support needed in vital areas like advising, instruction or financial aid to give our students the help they need. The impact of this situation is that we cannot offer as many high demand classes as our students need to graduate on time, students do not get the career and counseling advice they need, as often as they should get it, and one of the most critical student lifelines, our financial aid office, has to choose whether we will be available to talk to students or process their financial aid forms. These requests are an all too modest attempt to restore instructional and student service integrity in the face of the rapid growth of Arts and Sciences by restoring faculty lines; expanding our critically understaffed and overloaded Advising and Financial Aid units, providing operational support for units that have been cut to the bone, providing information technology solutions that helps our students by providing increased Banner support, and by using information technology solutions to help our students gain access to services. *We need help from our legislators to reverse our rapidly declining ability to serve our students.* We need to offer our students access to an education we can all be proud of. I believe with your support, we will be able to restore the basic services that connect our students to fulfilling their hopes and dreams.

Advising

Arts and Sciences Advising serves our entire campus. We currently have an advising ratio of 1 advisor to about 1,500 students in the face of recent losses of advisors, while the nationally recognized standard is 1 advisor per 250 students. In the current situation, timely advising and thoughtful counseling for students who are trying to figure out majors and career paths is simply not available. We know that advising is a critical factor in student success, and so we are committed to providing students with walk in advising and counseling. We will be asking all freshman and sophomore students to be advised every semester until they have a good idea of where they are going and what they need to do to be successful.

The request of 8.5 FTE advisors combined with new information technology tools through our Student Tracking and Academic Reporting (STAR) support group are a good start but we will have to continue to expand advising services as time goes on. I know that any of you who have children in college expect that someone will pay attention to their education and help them through the tough times. Expanding our advising core is the best way for us to do that here at UHM.

Financial Aid

We also need to make sure our students can finance their college education. We currently have a small staff and recent losses in staffing have hurt our ability to serve student need (over 17,000 of our 20,600 students have applied for financial aid). In 2003-2004, we had several federal audit findings of non-compliance with federal standards because of understaffing which could result in penalties. Just for the sake of comparison, UH Manoa has 1 financial aid advisors per 1,872 students while UH Hilo has a ratio of 1 advisor per 510 students. The legislation provides for 6 hires to meet the needs of new financial aid legislation for veterans and to provide counselors to improve student access to timely advice so they can better fund their college education. We also are using information technology solutions to help us automate and improve services which will be discussed below.

Information Technology Support

The requests made above do not fully staff and support the needs of our students, thus we have begun to try to be more efficient and effective in how we move student support into the future. In advising, counseling, enrollment management, financial aid and international student support, we have been handling many routine office functions through manual data entry. This is prohibitively expensive and leads to data error, without providing students better access to services. We have initiated a project to better meet our students' needs by providing information technology support to front line offices, through automation of routine transactions, by reducing paper flow (for example, in one case we found a document had to move 17 times by hand between students and various offices to complete a financial aid transaction) and providing superior Web-based services that can be accessed 24 hours and 7 days a week by our students through the MyUH portal. Using STAR, a software solution being developed and tested by UHM banner and information technology specialists, students will ultimately have access to

better degree planning tools, financial aid information, and more transparent class scheduling options. Thus we will be using STAR technology to automate financial aid, international student services, financial aid, advising and other critical areas where information technology solutions can reduce labor and increase our ability to directly interact with our students. These services also translate to a suite of new web based services that will always be available day or night so students do not have to schedule appointments as often to meet with personnel. While we are excited about programs that help us approve courses faster, offer degree planning support and “what if” scenarios so our students can assess the impact of changing majors, or save 30,000 hours of data entry by financial aid and help reduce paper flow by 20,000 pieces of paper per year, the real impact of these changes will be that students get what they need when they need it and will have better support.

Instructional Support for Students

To directly address the loss of faculty in Arts and Sciences in the face of the largest increases in enrollment on our campus, we have requested funding for approximately 75 classes staffed by part time faculty, and for 6 new faculty positions in the areas experiencing the greatest enrollment growth. This is just a start at addressing the classroom education needs of our students, and we need to note that the funds requested will support instruction as well as fundamental operations. We will be able to keep our telephones working and faculty can make photocopies. Students will get supplies and equipment needed in laboratories, art classes and music classes. Educational materials and supplies along with computer software and equipment for educational needs are also desperately needed, and we have no place in our budget to purchase these items. This request does not go far enough but will cover basic needs and help our deans deploy funds to meet the highest priority educational needs they have in their units. There will not be enough money to go around, but you can be assured that these funds will be applied to the greatest needs of our students.

Faculty Lines

The College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature has lost 21 positions since 1999, and has lost approximately \$350,000 in operating funds. They desperately need hires in the department of English, as well as Chinese and Japanese. The College of Arts and Humanities has lost 25 positions since 1999 and over \$700,000 in operating funds since 2000. They have asked for additional hires in history and art, two very popular and large majors. The College of Social Sciences has lost 10.25 faculty and over \$2,600,000 since 1995 and has had tremendous growth in psychology and social sciences, their two top needs. Overall Arts and Sciences units have lost 56.25 positions and \$3,650,000 in base budget while their enrollment grew 55%. We have reallocated and moved funds to cover the most critical areas, but this has left a huge gap that we must fill over the next few years.

Chair Waters and members of the committee, I want to thank you for your time and attention. Please know that your commitment to these matters has been tremendously appreciated by students, faculty and administrators on the Manoa campus, and we feel

that this modest request will have a tremendous impact on our students and their academic growth. In short, we care about how our students are doing, and we are glad that you and your committee share that concern with us. I know that there are a number of other stake holders from the Manoa community who are interested in offering their thoughts on this legislation and who are available to help address any questions you may have, so thank you for this opportunity to express our needs. Let's continue to work together to help our state and help our students.