



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

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by

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HB 1868 RELATING TO CREATIVE MEDIA

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Berg, and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa supports the intent of HB 1868, and its companion SB 1922, to create financial incentives for and appropriate funds for a permanent facility for the successful and growing Academy for Creative Media.

We are proud of the many accomplishments of the Academy for Creative Media in its first three years at Mānoa. It has gained national and international recognition as it has become the premier program for media study in Hawai'i.

It would be difficult to describe ACM's inauguration in January of 2004 as humble beginnings. Although with only two faculty and a handful of students, it literally burst onto the scene, producing nine films and a collection of video game prototypes showcased at that year's Hawai'i International Film Festival, including the audience award-winning documentary.

Since then ACM has continued to produce outstanding student films that have been featured in such leading festivals as Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston and Shanghai. Just as importantly, it has established itself as an academically rigorous program within Mānoa's Colleges of Arts & Sciences, with eight highly qualified full-time

faculty – and active recruitment for a ninth – and experienced lecturers and staff well-respected in both the classroom and the media profession.

The Academy has developed a rich curriculum of 32 courses in the areas of digital cinema, computer animation and game design, critical studies, and indigenous filmmaking – a curriculum focus that makes us unique among film schools and media study programs. ACM's students, faculty, and curriculum are firmly ground within a Hawai'i, Pacific and Asian sense of place that projects a new and exciting cultural voice that is authentic, articulate and empowering.

Both students and faculty draw from the immense Mānoa experience of knowledge and learning, enhancing their skills and techniques of visual storytelling through the study of literature, computer science, philosophy, history, art, sociology, music, theatre, Asian, Ethnic and Hawaiian Studies.

One hundred seventy five students are enrolled in 20 ACM course offerings this semester in character animation, visual effects, computer game production, beginning and advanced digital cinema, screenwriting, directing, oral tradition to screenplay, media ethics, oceanic media and culture, and post-modernism in Asian cinema. Ten students are interns on the ABC-TV hit series LOST. Several others are pursuing independent and group filmmaking projects. Two of our students have received grants from the Women's Filmmaker Initiative to produce their short films, and many more will compete for production funds from the annual ACM Scriptwriting Competition.

ACM students are also enriched by the depth and breadth of the Mānoa campus, they are exposed to disciplines such as Journalism, Communications, Computer Science, Art, American studies, Anthropology, English, Geography, History, Indo-Pacific Languages, Religion, the Languages and Literatures of Europe and the Americas, Pacific Island Studies, Theatre and Dance. The ACM degree is truly interdisciplinary, and exposes the future creative leaders of Hawai'i to the best of our diverse curriculum.

These student competitions are two of the many ACM programs supported by grants and generous community donors such as the Roy and Hilda Takeyama Foundation, which equipped our students with their “electronic toolbelts” for filmmaking, and supported student interns on the set of SUPERMAN RETURNS in Australia, and student filmmakers to screen their work at the Shanghai International Film Festival. The Jay Shidler Family Foundation has supported a fund that has allowed ACM to bring such industry luminaries to conduct Master Classes as directors Cameron Crowe, Justin Lin, Bryan Singer and Randal Kleiser, actor Kal Penn, and legendary producer Jon Peters.

Hollywood Director Roland Emmerich, the James and Abigail Campbell Family Foundation, Pipeline FX, and the Ko Olina Foundation generously provided the \$200,000 necessary to establish the ACM Animation RenderFarm, placed at Leeward Community College to serve digital media programs for campuses across the UH system and for high schools across the state.

The Academy has forged two international partnerships – with Shanghai University and the Shanghai International Film Festival, and with the national Korean Film Council to co-sponsor an annual Korean Filmmakers Initiative for Korean Americans. Several other international partnerships and exchanges are in the works.

Like all endeavors worth growing quickly, this tremendous growth has not come without growing pains, particularly in the area of space. Although ACM shares the permanence of academic integrity with other established Mānoa programs, we haven’t been able to accommodate them with permanent space. ACM soon outgrew the small suite of offices we provided for its initial stages. Faculty have had to be placed in borrowed space in different buildings. ACM has had to share a small, under equipped and cramped studio and working space. There has been no room for dedicated classrooms, workshops, labs, soundstage and post-production, library and other resources, screenings, or simply a space for students to gather to share ideas and collaborate on projects.

The desire of the Legislature to provide the resources to the University to create a permanent home for the Academy for Creative Media is greatly appreciated and applauded. We are committed to working with you to see this become a reality.

We welcome the Legislature's interest in our dilemma for additional space, and we have three scenarios for a home for ACM we would like to discuss:

- UHM has a request for a Centennial Classroom Building as our top priority for new development on the Mānoa Campus. Additional support for this project would allow us to accommodate the ACM within the first academic building built on our campus since the 1970's.
- We also have a request to develop a building for our College of Education on the ewa campus, partially to replace the building we lost to fire this past summer. We have room for an additional floor on this building which, with additional assistance, could be outfitted to accommodate ACM.
- We have been in discussions with PBS Hawai'i, which occupies a building on our campus, on how to accommodate ACM within that facility; we would be interested in engaging with the Legislature on how you may be able to help us make that happen faster.

Mahalo for your support for this important program, and I look forward to a continuing dialogue on how Mānoa can assist the state in Economic Development.