

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



HB 2976 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

January 31, 2008

by

Rose Tseng
Chancellor
University of Hawai‘i at Hilo

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Our local media have made us fully aware of the State's staffing shortages in Historic Preservation, and many of the problems it has caused, and that Hawai`i Administrative Rules Title 13, Chapter 281 require principal investigators conducting archaeological work or cultural impact assessments in Hawai`i possess graduate degrees in archaeology or anthropology, or an equivalent field. We strongly believe that many of the current problems in the state's historic preservation program could be resolved by providing graduate training in cultural resource management at UH Hilo.

There are several reasons why the UH Hilo campus would provide the best opportunities for effecting positive changes in the overall number and composition of Cultural Resource Management professionals in Hawai`i. Of the 26 private consulting firms operating in Hawai`i, **none** of them have principal investigators who are of Native Hawaiian ancestry. This is despite MA training in archeological topics at Mānoa since 1930, and the awarding of the first Mānoa Ph.D. in anthropology in 1967. Notably, the anthropology department at Mānoa is re-directing their large and distinguished faculty to train more indigenous practitioners in Cultural Resources Management (CRM), but we feel that the greatest impact for increasing the number of indigenous practitioners in CRM can be obtained by establishing a CRM graduate program in Hilo.

Whatever decision this year's legislature makes, the effects of funding new graduate training programs will take time to reach the public sector. With no disrespect intended to the faculty at Mānoa, we feel that UH Hilo's campus provides the best opportunity for changing what is clearly a broken system. In fact, we hope to do so in concert with the extant graduate training program at Mānoa and with feeder programs from other UH campuses, but we will need to expand our faculty from the current number of five tenure-track undergraduate teaching positions. There are several reasons why funding a program at Hilo will result in the best outcome for the State.

First, the UH Hilo anthropology program maintains strong ties with Ka Haka `Ula O Ke`elikōlani our highly acclaimed College of Hawaiian Language, and it is our mutual mission to better serve the needs of the Native Hawaiian community and State by placing more Native Hawaiians and other individuals of local ancestry in key management positions in historic preservation. Because our anthropology program and our relationship with Ka Haka `Ula O Ke`elikōlani is so amicable, we can build meaningful partnerships between indigenous communities and our proposed resource management program.

Second, Hawai`i Community College's Hawaiian Lifestyles Program in Hilo has already initiated a certificate program in Cultural Resource Stewardship, directed by one of our

graduates, Sean Naleimaile, who undertook Herculean efforts to finish his MA at Mānoa despite being a Hilo resident who is married, and a father of four. He was forced to commute between Hilo and Mānoa to finish his graduate degree and few students with similar backgrounds have been willing or able to make the same sacrifices. By providing the opportunity for both BA and MA degrees in Hilo, the State will most effectively expand its opportunities to provide graduate training to underserved communities, particularly to Native Hawaiian students at HCC and UHH who could continue on to graduate degrees without leaving their families and jobs.

Third, the Big Island has an enormous land-base managed by both State and Federal agencies that could directly benefit a graduate program in Hilo. Currently, many of our B.A. level graduates majoring in anthropology are working for one of the aforementioned 26 private archaeological consulting firms, or work in entry level positions for state and federal agencies. UH Hilo students enrolled in our anthropology program over the last ten years are currently working on Hawai`i island for the State Historic Preservation Division, Volcano National Park, Pu`ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site, Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, Pu`uhonua O Hōnaunau National Historical Park, Pohakuloa Training Area, and several of the private consulting firms that operate in the State. Without graduate degrees, BA level graduates remain stuck in entry-level positions. Approximately half of the individuals are of Native Hawaiian ancestry, and 80% were born and raised in Hawai`i. These are precisely the people who could best serve the needs of the State in identifying and protecting cultural sites as part of the state regulatory process.

Finally, we understand that Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park has initiated a proposal to construct a 4 million dollar curatorial facility with federal monies in West Hawai`i. By placing a graduate program in Hilo, it will be possible to form a strong partnership with Kaloko through graduate training in collections management that could lead to the resolution of our need to establish better curatorial facilities in the State, and simultaneously provide more opportunities for university training to one of the least well served populations of potential college students in Hawai`i.

We truly believe that this bill is necessary to re-establish a strong and efficient historic preservation program for Hawai`i. We support the intent of the bill but are concerned about the cost incurred upon its passage. Notably, this initiative was approved in the UH Hilo budget priority process and recommended to the President. Since it did not make the Board of Regents listing we are unable to support this bill at this time because it is not part of the Board of Regents approved requests.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, I would be more than happy to address them to the best of my ability or you may contact me at 974-7444.