



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
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By
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SB 1256 Authorizing the issuance of General Obligation Bonds and Making an Appropriation for a Student Services Building at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Chair Sakamoto and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony supporting a Student Service Building at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

The University of Hawai'i at Hilo Student Services Building is desperately needed. A new facility will have a significant impact on services for students as well as providing better support for faculty and staff. It will provide a modern, responsive "one stop" student services location for students, faculty, parents and community members.

The building is greatly needed for the following significant reasons:

1. It will provide quality space for intensive and successful programs and services that will increase retention and graduation rates for students from Hawai'i. Counselors, tutors, academic advisors, and human support personnel will be able to assist students with a focus on the local population from Hawai'i.
2. To accommodate growth in the student body (35% in five years) and to especially meet the needs of our low-income, first-generation college students from Hawai'i which account for 68% of the student body. New support programs and staff have been created to respond to the needs of our student body.
3. It will bring together services and programs that are currently scattered throughout the campus because of lack of space. The new Student Services Building would provide "one stop shopping" bringing essential services to students together into an integrated high quality facility.
4. The existing space in the current building used for Student Services is crowded and prevents many counselors and staff members from conducting confidential meeting with students. Staff members must often meet with students outdoors to

discuss sensitive personal and confidential issues. There are no meeting spaces, no conference rooms, and no group meeting spaces in the building, even though these facilities are needed almost every hour of the day. Four tents were erected in the outdoor space on the second floor to try to provide additional usable space. Student tutoring, advising, meetings, and work is often done in these tents. They are hot, and during rain participants often become soaked. The new building will provide quality, confidential space, and will include meeting spaces, conference rooms, and adequate offices.

5. The current Admissions office space is embarrassing. It should be quality space because the Admissions office is the “front door” to the campus for hundreds of prospective students and parents from Hawai‘i. The offices are outdated and crowded. If an Admissions counselor wishes to meet with a family, they must do so in the lobby of the building to have enough space to accommodate several people in a conversation. The new building will provide quality office spaces and meeting space for Admissions, Financial Aid, and Records.
6. The current Student Services Building is in very poor physical condition. Over the past several years there have been several major “floods” of water into the building through the roof, even after several years of repairs and a roof replacement. Computers, student records, and valuable files were lost and mold and termites continue to be a problem.

Student services programs that will occupy the new building include counseling, academic advising, financial aid, admissions, tutoring programs, career services, disabled student services, women’s programs, the registrar’s office, and the business office.

When the Student Services Building is completed it will have a significant impact on students. The entire campus is excited and energized over the possibility of bringing the student services on campus together in a one stop location through this facility. Final funding is desperately needed to reach this goal. The University of Hawai‘i at Hilo is proud of its accomplishments toward supporting students. We thank you for your kind attention to further strengthen programs at UH Hilo. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.