



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEES ON TRANSPORTATION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TAXATION
ON
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2007

By
Dr. Jenny S. Samaan
UH System Director, Office of International Education

SB 1367 Relating to the Office of International Affairs

Chairs English and Fukunaga, Vice Chairs Inouye and Espero, and Members of the Senate Committees on Transportation and International Affairs and Economic Development and Taxation, I thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Office of International Affairs.

The University of Hawai'i supports the expansion of the role of the Office of International Affairs within DBEDT to include the facilitation, coordination, and promotion of educational relationships and exchanges with other countries through collaboration with and funding of existing international programs and organizations.

By serving a coordinating role, the Office of International Affairs can help ensure that the State of Hawai'i takes full advantage of our unique position and understanding of the Asia-Pacific region with a goal of competing in the global economy. At present there are numerous public and private organizations and agencies in our state that are engaged in global outreach, youth and leadership development, international education and training, but rarely are these entities fully aware of each other and therefore loose opportunities for collaboration and partnership.

When DBEDT has organized trade missions to Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea, various UH departments and campuses have participated. It is through these trade missions that UH faculty and administrators have established creative partnerships with the private sector both in Hawai'i and abroad. Two specific examples of UH programs that developed as a direct result of DBEDT's active international engagement are programs in the Shidler College of Business. One was a five-year Senior Leadership Program for Guangdong officials and the other is the imminent launch of executive MBA programs with Sun Yat-sen University. As a result of DBEDT organizing a Sister State and Sister State conference, the University was able to develop school excursion programs from venues that have cultural, historic, and economic ties to Hawai'i, which brought teachers and youth to our community colleges.

Often in Asian cultures the endorsement of State government is essential to having access to government officials in ministries of education and training or key public educational institutions. It would therefore be most beneficial for a Hawai'i State Office of International Affairs to serve as a focal point for our state's global engagement. The entrée provided by DBEDT has served as a starting point for furthering friendships and professional linkages.

Therefore, we believe that expanding the mandate of the Office of International Affairs and fully funding it would allow for greater synergy between and among the public, private, K-12, postsecondary, non-profit, and business sectors of our State in order to fully engage in the global economy.