UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Tuesday, Tuesday, April 5, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.
By
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And
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SCR 119 – URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA TO FUND AND FILL THE VACANT AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES FACULTY TENURE LINE POSITION AT THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES.

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Dela Cruz, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SCR 119. The College of Social Sciences values the significance of African American history and its impact in shaping the past of both America and the State of Hawai‘i. We strongly believe it is an important area of study and scholarship.

We are aware of concerns around the current vacancy in the Ethnic Studies Department dedicated to African American history and contemporary issues. Please know that the position is not being abolished from the department, and we have no intention of doing so. However, funding to fill the position, as it is with many other positions across all the units within the university, has not been available.

The college reiterates the importance of investing in the future of its students and recounts the factors that led to this current situation:

- Since 2009, the college’s general fund base has been reduced by more than $1.89 million, which is roughly a reduction of 12 percent. At the same time, collective bargaining has increased salary costs.
- Continued restrictions, such as unfunded liabilities and a mandated five percent reserve, have required that the college put in place austerity measures designed to maintain its level of services while adapting to the continuing erosion of its base budget and fiscal policies imposed by the administration.
- Since 2011, the college has lost 10 instructional faculty positions, and currently there are 22.5 instructional faculty positions that we have been unable to fill due

to funding constraints. These include vacancies in areas of high student demand such as Communications, Psychology, Sociology and academic advising.

We share your frustration and reiterate our commitment to the value of the study of the African American experience. Filling this position, along with other critical needs, remains our top agenda as we find our way through the reality of our current economic situation.