

TO: The Board of Regents
University of Hawaii

FROM: David Cameron Duffy Ph.D.
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And

President,
University of Hawai`i Professional Union

RE: CHOOSING A NEXT PRESIDENT

DATE: 24 May 2013

Dear Members of the Board,

I am submitting this as written testimony only. I appreciate the opportunity to address you and wish you good luck going forward in the process of selecting a new president for the University.

I'd like to suggest that it might be most helpful if we first take a look at the state of the system. We have had three presidents in the last ten years; only one has served their full contract. We cycle through presidents faster than we graduate students at our four-year institutions.

It has been well over a decade since the system was reorganized. Since that time, we have created an array of chancellors where there were once deans/provosts, and these chancellors have in turn begat individual administrative complexes on the separate campuses, replicating services that were once centrally managed. Originally the creation of the chancellorship at Mānoa was supposed to cost little but instead we have seen a proliferation of costly administrative positions that replicate functions between Mānoa and the system, and between the system and the community colleges. Some of this growth is clearly necessary as government regulations become more frequent and intrusive, but at the same time, it is obvious that in a time of decreasing state support, the growth, structure and function of these redundant levels of administration need to be more carefully thought out.

Mānoa lobbied for a chancellor separate from the president. Many at Mānoa now have serious second thoughts, feeling either neglected by the president or concerned about meddling in matters such as Athletics that are the responsibility of

the Chancellor. The community colleges also claim to be neglected even as their administrative hierarchies have individually expanded

Something isn't working. It may be a problem with the system rather than with the individuals. Here are several suggestions that might improve things.

1. Reduce the system to five chancellors: one for each four-year institution and one for the community colleges. Each chancellor would have a self supporting administrative structure run to common standards. Each would report directly to the Regents.

Either eliminate the presidency or reduce it to a position that is essentially staff to the BOR. The position would not be a layer in the middle with staff that duplicate those of the individual units. The position would oversee institutional information on metrics and budgeting for the entire system, handling compliance issues, assisting with articulation across the system, and providing advice to the BOR on issues that concern the system as a whole. The position would present the budget to the Legislature and be the system's spokesperson and advocate, working with both the BOR and the chancellors.

2. As in California, create two separate systems, one for the four-year colleges, one for the community colleges. Articulation might suffer, but as the paying parent of two students in the UH system I can tell you that articulation remains a work in progress. The two groups of institutions have different needs and missions. The four-year colleges especially need to decide how they are going to differ in terms of academic fields/research, so we avoid expensive redundancy. Similarly the community colleges need to be clearer about the balance between entry-level traditional students and those who are returning to acquire new skills.
3. If we must hire a president, don't hire based on how they would do in D.C., New York or Chicago. Think about how they would come across in Makiki, Hilo, Kahalui or Mānoa. They need to sell UH to the state before they take their show on the road. Contrary to what we may think, we don't necessarily need a local hire. The political environment in which a new president would work is no more special than Louisiana, Michigan or New Jersey. A local hire would have a head start but anyone else, willing to listen and learn, could be equally successful. The presidency has so far avoided what should be one of its main tasks: getting Hawaii to agree on what it wants from its higher ed system. A president who could help reach a consensus might solve many of our problems.

There are probably other models which may be equally effective, but let's spend the time to think about them and discuss them, rather than throwing future hires into positions where they may be doomed to fail.