

UH needs oversight structure revamped, union says

UHPA wants discussion of M.R.C. Greenwood's successor's duties before a search for candidates

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While the University of Hawaii Board of Regents is still deciding how to go about naming a new system president to succeed M.R.C. Greenwood, the faculty union is calling for a reorganization of presidential duties and oversight.

J.N. Musto, executive director of the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly, said the union would like to see a revamped organizational structure in which the UH president becomes chancellor of the 10-campus system and CEO of the Board of Regents, focusing on statewide issues such as the university's operating budget and hiring of individual campus leaders.

"Recent experience and time have only reinforced my belief that such a change should occur, which would significantly change the criteria by which the regents would search for and choose a new UH system chancellor to replace the current president," Musto testified at a regents meeting Friday afternoon.

Under the current system, each campus is led by a chancellor, and the president reports to the Board of Regents. The 15-member board has exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management and operation of the university.

Greenwood, 70, announced her retirement May 6, saying she wants

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to spend more time with family and deal with health issues. Her contract was set to expire July 31, 2015.

Her announcement came amid mounting criticism from lawmakers and the public nearly a year after UH became embroiled in the so-called "Wonder blunder" from a botched Stevie Wonder concert that was to have been a benefit for UH athletics but ended up costing the school more than \$200,000 in an alleged scam.

Musto said UHPA has long suggested the regents consider a model where operational authority is delegated to individual campuses to eliminate blurred lines of authority and increase accountability.

"I would suggest that there is a more efficient and effective organizational structure that better reflects the reality of the University of Hawaii — and its component campuses — that would make it a much more functional way to look at the new presidency," Musto said.

UHPA President David Cameron Duffy, a botany professor at UH-Manoa, suggested in testimony that the president's position either be eliminated or reduced to a Board of Regents staff position.

Duffy said the redesigned 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 (Board of Regents) on issues that concern the system as a whole."

He added that the regents should consider different models first, "rather than throwing future hires into positions where they may be doomed to fail."

Other union representatives testified about qualities and qualifications they'd like to see in a candidate.

"We need someone who has humility as well as self-confidence — humility in

the sense of wanting to learn how things are done here in Hawaii nei, someone who will appreciate the history of this place, its politics and the culture that shapes the unique rhythm of social interaction here," said Sharon Rowe, UHPA's vice president and a professor at Kapiolani Community College.

The executive committee of the Manoa Faculty Senate cited concerns about "duplicative bureaucracy" in the president's office, saying in testimony that an "enlargement in the UH president's office in people and functions consumes ever greater university resources that are better directed to the actual educational missions of the individual campuses.

"We hope that the Board of Regents will examine the Office of the President and conclude that its main functions lie in the area of coordination and facilitation, not a heavy-handed, imperious role," the committee said.

After hearing testimony the regents went behind closed doors, where Regents Chairman Eric Martinson said specific candidate names would be discussed along with personnel matters related to Greenwood's retirement.

About two hours later the board issued a statement saying it had appointed a "task group," chaired by regent John Holzman, "to report on the logistics of the presidential search."

"The board respects the university's numerous constituents and acknowledges the importance of soliciting public input. The board made no substantive decisions about the selection process at this meeting and will hold a public, facilitated meeting in early June to consider the process for the selection of the university's next leader," the statement said. "At that time, the Board will appoint a selection committee composed of board members."