Remarks introducing the Lack of Confidence in VCAA Reed Dasenbrock

The SEC unanimously forwards to the Manoa Faculty Senate the accompanying resolution, which expresses lack of confidence in the Manoa Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Reed Dasenbrock.

This strong and unanimous recommendation is made with much thoughtful deliberation and realization of far-reaching impacts to UH Manoa. CPM referred the matter to the SEC, in Attachment 3. There is an ongoing investigation that has to do with specific acts of discrimination and bullying. It will take its own course and its own time. It is not necessarily connected to this action. This action today reflects the senate’s view of this VC’s ability to perform his duties. It does not require any special knowledge about the complaint or private behavior. It is this senate’s duty to evaluate this situation, and we propose to do so with this resolution, regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

The situation between the VCAA and a large number of faculty from across the campus has become intolerable.

The VCAA has created a dysfunctional working environment on the campus, one in which academic discussions and ideas are not allowed to flow freely. Dr. Dasenbrock’s actions as VCAA over the past six years have been toxic to our campus environment. Many chairs feel that his toxic behavior diminishes the success of our academic programs rather than nourishing them. I imagine that everyone here can think of having had the experience of a supportive mentor, someone who respected you and led you through your own academic journey. You may not have always agreed with your mentor, and your mentor may have said, “This will be very difficult, but go for it,” but you were supported and respected by that mentor. On the other hand, Reed Dasenbrock has created a barrier for a number of faculty members across the campus to get appropriate academic support from the chief academic officer. With this resolution, the SEC is asking the Manoa Faculty Senate to say, “Enough.”

Some of you may have concerns about condemning an administrator. Let me address a few of them here.

As you may know, it is the administration’s responsibility to investigate specific allegations. That is a separate process that is in its 9th month—a glacial pace by any standard. The outcome of the vote today will not affect that investigation. This resolution comes from faculty governance,
and the resolution, if approved, states that the Manoa Faculty Senate lacks confidence in VCAA Dasenbrock to effectively fulfill his duties. It is appropriate for the senate to make a statement about the performance of the VCAA, regardless of any investigation.

Some may be concerned that this action is a premature judgment of an unpopular administrator. It is not. He has been here more than six years, and we have had enough opportunity to come to a conclusion. Faculty review of administration is a time-honored process whereby faculty can exercise their rights to comment on executive performance, dating back hundreds of years, and codified in Regents policy 1.210, in Attachment 7. Further, it is the duty and responsibility of the faculty to look out for the best interest of the campus, especially in terms of academics and academic leadership.

Faculty at UH Manoa are strongly concerned with academic leadership. Namely, like us, many worry:

- that programs have been harmed under his management.
- about the campus climate he has created.
- about offensive racist and sexist statements he has made publicly in the presence of faculty leadership.

- And we are concerned about resources.

But let me be very clear: This resolution has nothing to do with resources. Faculty are concerned with a failure of leadership. We deserve better.

Some may say that the VCAA has had to make difficult decisions, so we should cut him some slack. There is nothing difficult about a person in power saying, “My way or the highway.” What would be difficult, and what he has shown an inability to do consistently, is working collaboratively with faculty to take competing needs into account and then to make decisions based on principles and explain to the faculty why those decisions were the ones to be made.

You may be concerned that the Senate acting now will embarrass the university. It will be more embarrassing if the faculty continue to accept the lack of effective academic leadership required for the campus to thrive. Furthermore, the suggestion that we are disloyal if we speak against someone who has bullied many of our colleagues enables the dysfunction to continue.
You may be concerned that we should let the investigation run its course prior to official faculty comment. Administrators at both the system and campus levels have confirmed that our taking this action will not affect the investigation. VP Jan Gouveia and Chancellor Robert Bley-Vroman both confirmed that this is the only governance action for faculty to take. With this resolution, the MFS takes a stand for faculty governance, the strength of our academic programs, and the success of our students.

Apparently a substantial majority of our colleagues agree with this assessment. In the recent UHPA survey of Vice Chancellor performance, 68.1% of Mānoa faculty disagreed with the statement that he should be renewed. Only 23.5% agreed that he should be renewed. The VCAA scored the equivalent of D’s and F’s on the majority of measures. The faculty are speaking. Today it is time for the senate to speak.

Let us remember that this resolution will not result in a determination of wrongdoing, rather it is an assessment of whether we as a senate body have confidence in this individual's ability to perform his duties. The SEC believes strongly that the faculty have made requests for remedy and that we have been more than patient. The time to speak up has arrived.

The SEC stands in unanimous support of this resolution, and we ask you to enact it by voting yes.

The acting chair will open the floor for discussion.