

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT



REPORT TO THE 2023 LEGISLATURE

Annual Report on Operations of the
Hawai'i Research Center for Futures Studies

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HAWAI‘I RESEARCH CENTER FOR FUTURES STUDIES

Activities for the year 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

Since the last legislative report, the Center has continued its tradition of collaborative faculty and student research, consultations, and workshops, both in Hawai‘i and internationally. In what follows is a series of recommendations to the State of Hawai‘i, and a brief description of a selection of activities undertaken by the Center.

Our graduate researchers, affiliate researchers, and faculty researchers have expertise in a wide variety of areas from new media and information technologies, artificial and machine intelligence, Hawaiian resurgence, geoengineering, to national security, space exploration, participatory governance design, and sustainable agriculture and development. We are capable of providing issue-specific consultation, and creating and running futures design workshops. All funding for the Center’s activities has been generated by clients requesting our work or through extramural grants obtained by members of the Center, such as the National Endowment of the Humanities, Orfalea Center, Carnegie Corporation, the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, the US Fulbright Program, and the National Science Foundation. The director and researchers receive no additional funding from the Hawai‘i state legislature beyond their salaries as professors. The director and faculty affiliates do not receive course releases or other workload benefits for their work in the Center, nor do any of the Center affiliates or students. We would welcome support and projects from and for the state in the future.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES SINCE OCTOBER 2021

- Over the course of 2022, the Futures Center has devoted significant time and resources to the development and launching of an Intelligence Studies Certificate and Degree Track for Hawai‘i residents seeking employment in the growing intelligence and national security sector. The program is called Intelligence Studies in The Asia-Pacific. Activities have included preparations for and submission of an Intelligence Community Centers for Academic Excellence (IC CAE) grant to provide funding for curriculum development; working with the Intelligence Mentoring Pilot program connecting UH undergraduates with leaders in the field of intelligence; developing syllabi and course offerings for the study of national intelligence; and working with partners Indo-Pacific Command and The Hawai‘i Defense Alliance to develop a program that benefits the state of Hawai‘i.
- In Fall of 2022, we successfully launched the gateway course for the program POLS 120. We have 117 students in our first cohort of ISAP.
- In the past year we have also built significant corporate partnerships with Huntington-Ingalls, Booze Allen, Valens corporation as well as others Hamilton to help prepare more residents of Hawai‘i to compete in the growing fields of intelligence analysis.
- In Fall of 2022, Boyd DeLanzo and Ari Eisenstat have launched a collaborative research project with U.S. Space Force and the Futures Center Outer Space Research Initiative.
- The Center continues to provide supervision and guidance to over thirty graduate students in the pursuit of their MA and PhD degrees. Many of the students work for state offices, lead civil society organizations, or serve in the armed forces. The Futures Center works very hard to accommodate non-traditional students in need of further education who cannot leave their

vital positions in state and national government service. The ISAP program supplements out graduate student engagement with an expansive undergraduate initiative

FUTURES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE OF HAWAI‘I

Over the past year, the Futures Center has been part of a number of planning and foresight events in Hawai‘i and throughout the world around futures, climate change futures, and national security futures. These discussions have been at the city, state, national, and international scale. The following statewide recommendations are gleaned from those meetings with an eye to what makes Hawai‘i a distinctive living and policy environment.

These recommendations are along three major sectors for which the Futures Center has cultivated its strengths in research and collaboration. The three areas are: environment, economy, and security. We are always available to the Governor’s office and Legislature to discuss and conduct research about these recommendations, or other areas of concern.

Environment: Our international research suggests that the state of Hawai‘i ought to develop contingency plans for rapid and unexpected climate and non-climate related changes to the environment. Existing planning horizons may be accurate but there is a need to develop contingencies for climate related inundation as well as disruptions to food supply, clean water, energy production, and sewage treatment on five- and ten-year horizons rather than twenty- and thirty-year horizons. The gap between disaster management and long-term planning is closing faster than many have predicted. While there is some hope for averting runaway warming as the U.S. rejoins the international climate change effort, there is little chance of avoiding significant disruptions in the next five to ten years. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on climate modification suggests that Hawai‘i and the Pacific region may face significant consequences from artificial efforts to remove CO₂ and cool the planet. Unlike the mainland, our state needs to prepare to adapt to consequences of successfully preventing global warming as well as the failure to prevent it.

Economy and Workforce Development: COVID made apparent how vulnerable the state of Hawai‘i is to disruptions in travel and leisure. The war in the Ukraine has equally shown how disruptions in the energy market uniquely impact our state. In addition to the possibility of further disruptions from future waves of COVID or subsequent pandemics, the worsening geopolitical situation could also disrupt supply chains to Hawai‘i. Investing in onsite manufacturing, sustainable agriculture and food production, as well as the capacity for repair and building essential hi-tech infrastructure and emergency energy alternatives as well as financial supports for the downstream effects of price shocks should be a high priority for the state.

Opportunities for land restoration and traditional forms of agriculture as well as collaborative energy alternatives are not just opportunities for cultural renewal, they also provide the possibility of independence and security during turbulent times. While mitigation strategies showed themselves to be effective at resuscitating this economy during the worst of COVID, the long-term sustainability of our current economic structure is questionable and even possibly detrimental to a thriving future Hawai‘i.

Furthermore Hawai‘i already finds itself in the middle of a generation-defining international gambit between the U.S. and China further complicated by North Korea and increasingly Russia as well. While we are part of the U.S., we do not bear the risks of miscalculation and war equally with the continental states. It is essential that Hawai‘i residents be able to serve in critical decision-making roles in state and national government to influence the policies that will determine our fate. The Hawaiian economy will increasingly be populated with defense-related contractors and jobs. Hawai‘i residents need the educational opportunities to be prepared to fill those jobs so that the changes to the economy and the region reflect local interests and perspectives, not just the interests of those living thousands of miles away.

Security: The Futures Center’s work this year with Indo-Pacific Command as well as international security partners around the world further confirms that the defense sector of the U.S. sees itself in a competitive and antagonistic relationship with China, North Korea, and Russia.

At the same time, the U.S. alliance system that currently defines the security order for the Pacific is under heavy strain. Possible futures include a significant buildup of military force in and around Hawai‘i. Some possible futures could find Hawai‘i again as the halfway point between two warring states. The role of the U.S. military in Hawai‘i and the civil defense of our state will face many challenges in the next two decades.

Furthermore, the public would greatly benefit from more opportunities to discuss the future of geopolitics and the consequences for the State of Hawai‘i. Public fora on these questions beyond mandatory community meetings for military planning are essential to democratic accountability. The perspectives of Hawai‘i residents are not often included in the formulation of grand strategy in Washington D.C. However, Hawai‘i will be the implementation of grand strategy for the foreseeable future. Given the unprecedented nature of these changes, new institutions may be required.

We recommend folding in geopolitical scenarios and changes with state and local planning on disruptions such as climate change and economic disorder. Given the similar necessities for preparation regarding infrastructure, preparedness, and resilience, city and state planners may need to consider how to integrate geopolitical disruption into the images of the futures.

As always, the Center is happy to facilitate those opportunities for education and new thinking where the Governor or legislature finds it appropriate.

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