



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

---

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Agriculture and  
House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness  
Wednesday, April 13, 2022, at 11:00 a.m.

By  
Debora J. Halbert  
Vice President for Academic Strategy  
University of Hawai'i System

SCR 215 SD1 – REQUESTING VARIOUS STATE GOVERNMENT ENTITIES TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN THE STATE TO ENSURE CAREER READINESS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Chairs Hashem and Yamane, Vice Chairs Perruso and Tam, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The University of Hawai'i (UH) would like to provide comments on Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 215 Senate Draft (SD) 1.

The UH provides information in response to assertions in SCR 215 SD1 below. While we appreciate the concerns underlying this resolution, we believe the resolution to be unnecessary and recommend it be deferred.

### **Nursing**

The State is facing a nursing shortage brought about by a combination of factors:

- The pandemic;
- Retirements and restructuring in the health care system;
- Already existing issues associated with rural health care; and,
- Faculty shortages.

These problems are not unique to Hawai'i but exist nationwide. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has recently started convening meetings on the health care shortage across the western states so that higher education institutions can share strategies and best practices as we respond to this critical and growing need. UH has been participating in these meetings. Before the WICHE initiative, UH was already hosting systemwide convenings with the health sector and educational institution partners, including the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE), to determine how we could best work together to address the nursing shortage and related issues across the State.

Our UH Community Colleges (UHCCs) recognize the critical need to develop statewide Hawai'i's workforce, including healthcare and nurses. Within our discussions, UHCCs are working collaboratively to meet workforce needs statewide while avoiding duplication of programs across campuses. For example, Kapi'olani Community College offers its nursing program at Leeward Community College, and Kaua'i Community College provides its Medical Assistant training program at Maui College. SCR 215 identifies a concern about nursing workforce needs in the Kalihi area and directs UH to "examine the feasibility of offering nursing

programs, allied programs or both at Honolulu Community College provided by Honolulu Community College or in coordination with other UH Community Colleges to meet regional workforce needs.” UH agrees that an assessment of feasibility and partnering with other UHCCs are the right next steps.

In addition, now that our pandemic constraints have primarily passed, we are planning to implement an institutionally-supported pre-nursing pathway at UH West O’ahu to replace the previously federally funded program. Furthermore, UH Mānoa recently started a distance learning BSN program to assist RNs on Maui to continue upward career mobility. This program can further extend to other islands and locations as well.

### **Hawai’i P-20 Partnerships for Education**

SCR 215 SD1 questions the engagement, oversight, and direction of the Board of Regents (BOR) and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy (OVPAS) over Hawai’i P-20. Hawai’i P-20 is a statewide collaboration of the Department of Education, the Executive Office of Early Learning, and the UH, the latter of which agreed to host the partners and does so under the auspices of the OVPAS. Here, we seek to clarify how Hawai’i P-20 fits within the UH administrative structure to demonstrate that there is ample oversight and coordination in place.

Hawai’i P-20 updates the BOR periodically on its activities, most recently at the November 18, 2021, and May 20, 2021, BOR meetings. The BOR also designates a Regent to serve on the Hawai’i P-20 Advisory Council – a high-level advisory group composed of leaders from education, business, labor, government, and the community who have a shared vision and mission of improving educational outcomes for Hawai’i. Operationally, the Hawai’i P-20 executive director participates as an integral part of the OVPAS leadership team, meeting weekly to discuss the systemwide academic vision and goals for UH, including Hawai’i P-20 initiatives and programs in collaboration with the DOE. In addition, Hawai’i P-20 widely engages with education stakeholders throughout the State about its many initiatives that help inform the agenda for state action around education goals and attainment efforts.

The merger of the former Office of the State Director for Career and Technical Education (OSDCTE) with Hawai’i P-20 was designed to create essential synergies in workforce development at the critical juncture of K12 and higher education and reduce administrative costs. As of July 2021, under reorganization proposed by the UH administration, supported by stakeholders, and approved by the BOR, Hawai’i P-20 has served as the administrative arm of the State Board for Career and Technical Education (SBCTE). As defined in HRS §304A-302, the SBCTE’s function is to administer the provisions of Acts of Congress related to CTE – currently, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act, commonly referred to as “Perkins V.” HRS §304A-301 designates the BOR as the SBCTE and the UH President as the administrative officer of the SBCTE. As such, Hawai’i P-20 reports to SBCTE and the UH President on matters related to the federal Perkins grant and assists the SBCTE in carrying out the purpose and provisions of the Perkins legislation. Additionally, Hawai’i P-20 now collaboratively develops and revises the State of Hawai’i Perkins V Plan, recommends establishing policies for CTE, and assists the Hawai’i Department of Education and the UH Community College System in planning and coordinating, and evaluating CTE programs and activities. With the recent reorganization, we expect to achieve greater integration and leverage of the federally supported CTE program with other pathways for career education and training within and between UH and the DOE.

Hawai'i P-20 has grown since its inception and now executes multiple statewide initiatives and programs, primarily through grants, contracts, and philanthropy rather than state appropriations. Most of Hawai'i P-20's operating budget is funded through these outside sources. For FY 2020-21, approximately 90% of Hawai'i P-20's operating expenditures were financed through extramural contracts and grants, including federal discretionary grants, state pass-thru federal grants, and private philanthropic grants.

Hawai'i P-20's grants and contracts have specific budgets, deliverables, and outcomes associated with each award; in other words, these grants are restricted and used to support each award's intent and objectives. Likewise, Hawai'i P-20's current staffing mix, which now includes the former OSDCTE positions, comprises 10 permanent, generally funded positions (9 currently filled and one in progress); 4 permanent, federally funded positions; and 24 temporary, extramurally funded positions. Like the grants that support them, the extramurally funded positions have specific functions tied to grant deliverables.

Hawai'i P-20 has engaged in college and career readiness (CCR) initiatives since its inception. It continues to promote CCR so that students have the knowledge and skills to enroll in and successfully complete credit-bearing courses, workforce training, and/or apprenticeship programs without the need for remediation. Such preparations ensure students conclude their programs ready to enter a career of their choice. Through its various grants, Hawai'i P-20 creates, expands, and integrates activities and programs that support students' academic and workplace readiness skills.

Across the State, many organizations are working on career and workforce initiatives. These programs are governed by their organizational structures, boards, and hierarchy— all work towards achieving their goals through different strategies. In many cases, these programs are aligned with Hawai'i's current "55 by '25" attainment goal. Hawai'i P-20 does not have authority over these organizations or their programs; nonetheless, it continues to inform and influence its education partners and stakeholders through collaboration to take action in preparing Hawai'i's students for high-skill, high-demand jobs.

### **College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR)**

As a land grant institution, UH Mānoa (UHM) is home to faculty, extension agents, and a wide range of programs dedicated to serving the State's agricultural needs. Additionally, UH Hilo, UH West O'ahu, and the UH Community Colleges (CC) host programs dedicated to the State's agricultural needs. The leadership of CTAHR has been developing pathways for students starting at CC's to transfer into UHM programs. It is working with its CC partners to ensure these transfer pathways are responsive and robust. Additionally, CTAHR provides critical research and education in areas directly related to the current and future needs of agricultural growth in Hawai'i and has strong relationships with the State's agricultural sector. Among its critical duties and responsibilities is the research and education associated with essential topics such as the suitability of specific crops for particular locations given soil and climate considerations and responsiveness to invasive species, which can completely decimate a crop if not controlled.

There are several points raised in the whereas clauses related to CTAHR that must be clarified, and we believe the conclusion reached by SCR 215 SD1 does not follow the specific claim which has been addressed:

Molecular Biosciences and Bioengineering (MBBE) budget cuts of 30% due to change in budgeting – There were no budget cuts of any size to the MBBE department. In fact, the AY

2022 budget for MBBE is currently 270% higher than it was in AY 2018. Each year from AY 2018 to AY 2022, has increased in the MBBE budget and is verified by budget documents within CTAHR;

Budget cuts de-emphasized hands-on learning in MBBE – As shown above, there were no budget cuts to MBBE, but annual budget increases culminating in a budget of 270% in AY 2022. Any changes to hands-on learning resulted from decisions made by the faculty, including during multiple years of significant pandemic impact. Faculty are responsible for the curriculum and the types of learning utilized to help students meet the Student Learning Outcomes for specific courses and degree programs;

Fewer opportunities for MBBE student learning experiences with the Medical School – JABSOM faculty serve on MBBE student’s graduate committees at the MS and PhD levels. The pandemic may have impacted other learning experiences, but we cannot adequately address this allegation without specific examples. Note that any changes were not the result of budget cuts but were decisions made by the MBBE faculty;

Failed to review renewals of probationary faculty holistically – The tenure process is rigorous and grounded in specific criteria designed by the faculty in their area of expertise and reviewed by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Excellence, the Provost, and UHPA. These processes are applied consistently to all faculty up for review;

Not followed through on promises to hire two faculty members – This statement fails to consider the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing budget uncertainty, including the targeting of UH Mānoa in 2021 for the most significant reduction in legislative appropriations. The positions referenced were approved, and a search was underway when COVID-19 hit in spring 2020. At that time, hiring throughout the UH System was frozen. As the UH budget situation improved, UHM made hiring one of its highest priorities—approving limited hiring in AY 2022, where hires proposed clearly articulate its post-pandemic priorities, are necessary for the accreditation of critical programs, and/or address areas of highest program growth. Based on these priority indicators, CTAHR requested five positions, including one for MBBE, and received three, although unfortunately not the MBBE position;

Approved leave for faculty to pursue admin positions at another university – This statement misrepresents another confidential personnel decision addressed appropriately at the college level. We cannot disclose the details of an individual personnel action or how it has been remedied; and,

The Dean has not resolved conflicts in the College – It is unclear what this specific clause seeks to address. When made aware of real or perceived conflicts or issues, the college and university administration investigate. While any individual involved may not like the outcome and may send their complaints to legislators, that does not mean the conflicts have been ignored. As in any large complex organization that includes individuals with highly diverse backgrounds and experiences and strong personalities and views, not every personal disagreement can be fully resolved to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

The Cooperative Extension Service is not an agency but is a component of CTAHR. SCR 215 SD1 requests that the Legislative Reference Bureau evaluate CTAHR in relation to other cooperative extension agencies and submit a report. We believe that the underlying assumptions used to make the request do not merit the use of state resources for this purpose.

However, it is also the case that such a report will demonstrate that CTAHR offers programming and expertise comparable to other land grant programs across the United States.

More generally, the University of Hawai'i System serves the State of Hawai'i by offering a wide range of degrees spanning certificates and vocational training to advanced graduate degrees in cutting-edge research pushing the boundaries of knowledge. The ten campuses in the UH System each have distinct missions and characters. Still, all work together to implement and support programs that educate the citizens of Hawai'i across the myriad current and future possible jobs, professions, and leadership opportunities. Like any complex system operating on a statewide scale, UH has an organizational structure that relies upon its leadership with relevant experience and expertise to shape our academic programs and allocate resources where they are most critically needed. In each of these areas, we have dedicated faculty and administrators working to improve conditions in the state in an era of scarce resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.