



UH President Search Testimony

1 message

Dennis Lin <denniswjlin@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Thu, Sep 26, 2024 at 10:21 AM

Aloha Board of Regents,

My name is Dennis Lin and I am a 2009 alumni of UH-Hilo. I am providing testimony with comments pertaining to the UH System President Search and the 2 finalists.

I can see from both candidates that they are sufficiently qualified and have exemplary resumes. My concern is why is there no Hawaii based/connected candidates/finalists?

We choose leaders who can help promote the UH system and our diversity, curriculum, and academic achievements. Why not hire from our own backyard? Choose candidates who have lived experience in the UH system, grown their careers, and raised their families here in Hawaii.

We will spend more time educating the finalists on Hawaii's unique geographic location, socioeconomic landscape, culture, and political challenges.

I urge the Board to reconsider and bring together a short list of Hawaii-bred, UH-nurtured candidates to the table.

Mahalo for your work in stewarding Hawaii's higher education system.

Dennis

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Wendy Hensel

1 message

Davin Kubota <davink@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Sep 27, 2024 at 8:42 AM

I am greatly concerned about the neoliberal modalities that seem to be advocated for by candidate Hensel, which seems like they could be disastrous for UH System students.

In some part of the testimony given by candidate Hensel, candidate Hensel seems to imply that AI Chatbots and other AI elements could be used as a cost-effective way of counseling students. To me, this sets the groundwork for a class action lawsuit in the future.

Consider this hypothetical:

A student comes in for assistance at the counseling center. They are suicidal or express thoughts about suicidal ideation. Rather than receiving immediate HUMAN counseling, they receive a link or QR code to a chatbot that tries to talk them down. The student--already perceiving the UH campus as cold and unfeeling--commits suicide. The System gets sued for negligence and lack of care.

System needs someone who cares, not another corporatocracy-style bureaucrat who only cares about the bottom line.

If this system cared less about Timmy Chang and his football team and also filling the seats at a PAC 12 game and more about student wellness and student success, it would be a much stronger place consistent with its so-called value-statements.

Davin K. Kubota

ENGLISH

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Languages, Linguistics, Literature

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"The weakness of thinking machines is that they actually believe all the information they receive, and react accordingly."

--Vorian Atreides



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII*
KAPI'OLANI
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



No more UH president's without Pacifica ties and understandings!

1 message

Janina Martin <martinj@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Sep 27, 2024 at 8:45 AM

Aloha,

It is with heavy heart that I again look at candidates for UH president and see the glaring lack of understanding needed to run a University centrally located in Pacifica. How is it that time and time again the essential component of understanding of Pacific islands, peoples, and culture, rarely show up in finalists? Are we once again doomed to see continent-centric president fumble with the complexities and nuanced realities of what it means to be a Pacifica based and serving institution? I urge the board to fight the impulse to hold continent-based higher education degrees as more valid and valued than those of actual life experiences which are central to this particular position. We don't need more Dobell or Greenwood experiences which had the effect of setting us back and didn't allow for true progression of learning and growth as an institution. We need someone who is innovative and rooted in understandings of those being served. I urge the board to go back to the process to find those candidates.

Mahalo,
Janina Martin

Wendy F. Hensel Feedback Survey

1 message

Kristel Whippy <kris25@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Sep 27, 2024 at 6:52 AM

Good morning,

I feel Ms. Hensel will not be a suitable candidate for President of UHM for the following reasons:

1. She repeatedly claimed that she was pro-freedom of speech, but every example she gave alluded to supporting far right persons and I am not aware of any examples of her taking a balanced approach. DEI is not about integrating hateful rhetoric or giving people a pass for harmful conduct because of "freedom of speech". She also gave an example of a situation of offense to, I believe, Black women and having them come up to her later and fawn over how grateful they were for the open discussion/admission of wrongdoing. I don't buy it. Those of us in marginalized communities never trust flowery rhetoric because we're all too familiar with the misalignment of subsequent actions. You can review any politician's public statement on claiming to help a marginalized person/community and it is framed the exact same way, which makes it all the more unbelievable;
2. She was not willing to answer my question which was "On 18 September 2024 the UHM Library hosted "Book Talk - Ben Hecht: Iconoclastic Writer and Militant Zionist" Do you agree this is tone deaf given the ongoing Gaza genocide? Why/why not? How would you, as President, create a safer and diverse UHM?" She clearly does not understand how to handle DEI outside of flowery rhetoric of being pro-DEI. More to the point Hawai'i is a place that is illegally occupied and facing various negative, ongoing, consequences of its illegal occupation. How can someone who won't even denounce the Palestinian genocide that's been ongoing for almost a year be expected to look out for the best interests of Native Hawaiians who aren't currently facing the extremity of apartheid and genocide. She is someone who can only take a stand on past and well-settled (by others) issues. The fact she buys into the "it's complicated" narrative or needs universal consensus on what is right or wrong indicates that she will not be able to do what's in the best interests of marginalized groups as and when issues arise. Those of us who face racism or bigotry can't be waiting around for her to get universal consensus before we are given a semblance of protection, which is not likely with someone like this;
3. She also mentioned early on in her speech that she was willing to do the "hard thing" and stand up for ethics, etc., how can someone claim to have ethics when they treat genocide as a "complicated issue". That's not even a "hard thing" and she's already failed. She does not have what it takes to stand up for people and she clearly will not do it if there's any chance of backlash or risk to her career. She is already showing strong signs of hypocrisy and misalignment of her rhetoric with her actions. Typical politician stuff.

She was very disappointing and hopefully this isn't going to be yet another situation of both candidates being equally unsuited for the position. Will see at the next candidate's public forum.

Yours sincerely,

Kristel (Kris-tell) Whippy (She/Her)
LLM Student (specializing in human rights)
UHM WSRSL



Feedback/Testimony for President Candidate Wendy F. Hensel

1 message

Ka`ōlinokaimana Yasuoka <kaolinokaimana@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Sep 27, 2024 at 5:51 PM



Presidential Candidate Feedback-2.pdf
133K

Friday, September 27, 2024

Comments on UH Mānoa Candidate for President Dr. Wendy F. Hensel

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

I am providing this feedback to the University of Hawai`i board of regents because I am concerned about the path the University is about to embark upon. I personally attended various institutions within the University of Hawai`i system, HCC (cosmetology and physics), UH Hilo (`Ike Kūpuna & `ōlelo Hawaii), WCC (Mele, Mo`olelo & Motion with Kumu Kawaikapuokalani Hewett), UH Mānoa (undergraduate College of Education degree–Ka Lama o ke Kaiau cohort, and my graduate certification in sustainability in resilience, and grad degree candidate for STEMS2). Throughout the decades of my attendance, the one direction that I do strongly support is the move for UH Mānoa to be “a Native Hawaiian place of learning.” I also strongly support the continued advancement of ike Hawai`i within the UH system as set forth by the Native Hawaiian Place of Learning Advancement. According to director Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu Punihei, “...it’s important that all of our campuses begin down the path of embracing the Hawai`i culture so that it informs and guides all that we do.” A candidate for UH President that is completely on board with this initiative is not optional, but must be prioritized.

Toward this end, there are many seeds that have already been planted, and foundations either in construction or already built. Ensuring that the nurturing, and support needed to ensure that what has taken root continues to grow is also essential. Hawai`i is leading the way in so many areas (if some of these programs are not recognized, they should be):

Indigenous Knowledge acquisition, reclamation, restoration that many other institutions far and wide can learn from -Hawaiian Studies, Hawaiian Language, Indigenous Arts deeply tied to culture, values, to `ike kūpuna

American Studies

Political Studies

Ethnic Studies

Women and Gender Studies

The Institute of Peace and Conflict | Ceeds of Peace

Sustainability and Resilience

SOEST

Philosophy for Children

Creative Writing

College of Social Sciences

Public Health

John A. Burns School of Medicine

UHERO

College of Education

Music, Dance, Theater

(Forgive me, I will leave others to share about other fields that I have not had the opportunity to participate in).

Some other areas that were not greatly discussed but are also essential in selecting our final candidate:

-Dedication to Social Justice, Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory, DEI...

How will we ensure that the way that we look at education, educational opportunities, and educational success, are being measured from an assets based approach, rather than a deficits approach? A huge concern I have with Dr. Hensel’s candidacy is that wanting to lead the University of Hawai`i system requires, I

believe, an understanding of knowing how to address the needs of students from a non-American-western perspective. One of the issues with the public education system in Hawai'i, is that there is all too often a disconnect between the individuals in leadership, administrative positions and their knowledge on how to measure success in multiple ways—not just based on traditional systems of testing, that are all too often from a deficits approach. Here in Hawai'i, a multitude of UH-based researchers have evidence that this is not how students in Hawai'i learn best. Rather it is important that the candidate for UH president understand the importance of education that has cultural relevance, that is culturally responsive, that builds connection, identity, and a sense of belonging.

(One reading to sample on this topic: Kana`iaupuni, S.M., & Ledward, B.C: [Ho`opilina: The Call for Cultural Relevance in Education](#))

When any administrator/leader come in to an educational space where they are not attuned to the on-going facets of school culture, many issues can arise.

During Dr. Hansel's talk she spoke about wanting to create a K-12 to College smooth transition. With a daughter who is a high school junior who is actively taking college classes at Windward Community College, I do believe that this program has provided her the opportunity to learn in a way that is different from some of the more traditional public HiDOE classrooms. She is a student that has a strong sense of self, she often thinks divergently and independently, she loves to read, write and reflect, without feeling bound by overly scripted, or overly controlled content material. The issue that I have with a UH president candidate who wants to in addition to supporting the UH system, but also wants to support the K-12 system is that many of the schools within the DOE charter and non-charter schools have been making the shift to teaching that goes beyond the 4 walls, teaching that includes the place and caring for the `āina, teaching that incorporates Hawaiian culture and values, teaching that addresses the diverse needs of its diverse student body. Towards this end, there is a lot of community tailoring that happens, that includes not or profit partnerships that are about building connections and networks. A UH President who understands that a cookie cutter, status quo vision, will be over-reach, and detrimental to what many schools having been working to build a foundation upon. I am greatly concerned with schools that have taken on the challenge to go beyond the western-American, ethnocentric textbooks, to be inclusive places of learning, will be stifled. It is of utmost importance that educators, and professors be able to utilize the knowledge that they have gained throughout their careers in ways that exhibit the respect that is deserved.

Honoring and valuing educators, professors, etc...

Towards that end, I would like to raise an issue that various Universities across the continent have been confronted with the hiring of adjunct, part-time professors in lieu of full-time professors as a cost cutting initiative. It is easy to say that faculty is at the heart of an institution, however, it is essential that the incoming UH President put action towards the talk and truly invest in the faculty at the University. Additionally, who is hired is also important—are their values in support of the initiatives shared at the end of the first paragraph, and is their value being reflected in their position and pay? Being competitive is important in UH being able to prevent the loss of faculty, but it is also I believe an issue of justice, whereby, faculty should be able to support their families, and lives here in Hawai'i.

As an educator, I understand the dedication that professors have toward their students.

Through the University of Hawai'i system, I have had the opportunity to learn from various professors who continue to influence the way that I think, reflect, and respond to the world in which we live. I was blessed to have learned from professors like, Dr. Isabella Aiona Abbott who grew in her students a love for this place, for its Native people, plants, animals; for its special ecosystems. She had a miraculous way of connecting culture

to science which allowed me, for the first time in my life, to take an interest to the field of science. She is an example of someone who knew how to artfully weave together her curriculum in ways that were not siloed but instead interdisciplinary. This is how we live and experience our lives, this way of teaching supports students not only in the acquisition of knowledge, but in increased engagement, and helps students to see how what they are learning is relevant to their lives. My professor, Haunani Bernardino, whose strength was found in her ability to create classrooms that allowed students to think, wonder, and reflect. She was a model of aloha, who knew how to embrace all.

A couple of recent professors who have greatly influenced me: Loea Frank Kawaikpauokalani Hewett, Dr. Pauline Chinn, Dr. Brooke Ward Taira, Dr. Kathryn Au, Dr. Margie Ma`aka...

We live in a world where we need to encourage the building of relationships, building learning communities

Because of the limited amount of time, Dr. Hensel was unable to speak into detail about this plan that she has for expanding online educational opportunities. Although this may increase the number of graduates, as UH Learning Community, we must be careful to ensure that educational opportunities are not just about learning materials, but that students are provided opportunities to build connections with one another—to build that essential community of learners (the power of having this when learning can not be taken for granted, and pushed to the side as not essential. I have seen time and time again how supportive, uplifting, encouraging, and empowering, building connections with a community of learners is. An online learner might not know about this. I believe that it is the role of an institution to ensure that they have within their system built in ways to help students to realize this through experience. A lack of schema on an applicants/students part, can not be a reason to take advantage of them. Knowledge is key to being able to make the best decision while on an educational journey.

Another issue is that students who took her classes have said that she can be condescending which can not be ignored..

The Importance of Finding the Right Fit

It isn't always that every i is dotted and every t is crossed.

A candidate that is too overzealous to prove something, is not here for the community, but instead is seeking out valor and recognition, power—to say the very least, and this is a huge issue. When a person is more concerned about how they look to others, then even if they make a mistake, a wrong turn, a poor decision, it will be hard for them to backtrack, to be vulnerable, to admit the mistake and find ways to make it right. But working in Hawai`i, it is difficult to get it right because there are so many stakeholders involved. And yes, not all stakeholders will be satisfied with decisions made, but if we say that research matters (as Dr. Hensel stated the importance of being a both teaching and research institution) then we need to be careful about which research we lean on for guidance, because not all research is neutral, not all research addresses and supports the needs of the indigenous, Pacific Island, and immigrant populations that make up a large part of Hawai`i's demographics and the work of UH is reflective of this.

Due to time constraints, I apologize, but I am unable to provide my full feedback, and have not been as thorough as I should have. However, it is my hope that the the Board of Regents, and any other entities who will be making the final decisions will consider the thoughts, and issues I raised.

Mahalo nui loa,
Alison M.K. Yasuoka



UH president search

1 message

Michael S. Spalding CCIM <mikaele1@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 30, 2024 at 11:39 AM

To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Cc: Randolph Moore <makikimoore@gmail.com>

I had the opportunity to listen to both candidates and was very impressed by both of their experience and willingness to lead UH. My feelings are that Wendy Hansel would be an outstanding Leader of the UH system. If UH could hire both of them in leadership positions that would be ideal.

Wendy seems to have more of a Hawaii connection having a home on Hawaii Island. I also think not having union ties gives her a better perspective in negotiations with the faculty union. As a mother I feel she has a good feel for how difficult it is to work, take classes, and parent kids. Both candidates were embracing AI. Hope the best candidate gets selected, The regents have way more intel and I trust you will make the best decision. aloha mike spalding Maui

Presidential search analysis

1 message

Erik Beach <ebeach@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Tue, Oct 1, 2024 at 4:24 PM

First and foremost I would like to thank the University of Hawaii for the opportunity to listen to both of the candidates and what they had to say in their interviews. Both of them are both highly qualified and well educated in their respective fields. They clearly both meet the administrative criteria for being the next president of the UH system with their credentials. Thank you again for finding such highly qualified individuals to consider for our next president.

The candidate that stands out to me based on both my research of them and their interview is Mr. Julian Vasquez Heilig. His answers were intellectual, factual and inclusive in their nature and I could feel that he honestly cares about the students and their needs. His connections to our islands and our culture are genuine and unbiased. He is both relatable and open to student engagement which is very important in these changing times. He is very current in the use and application of technology for learning and also for the facilitation of services in our system such as credit articulation. He is very well spoken and comes from humble roots. He demonstrates high levels of community engagement and support for minority populations in higher education and the willingness to listen. This candidate also understands the importance of our cultural identity and uniqueness here in Hawaii and is prepared to embrace it even further than he already has. I feel that he understands the challenges that our students are facing and has an organized and educated approach to tackling the issues that exist within our system. He demonstrated that he also understands the need and desire of our university to have leadership with local roots and promised to bring home Hawaiian scholars from abroad to strengthen our cultural ties and foster a better future for the people of Hawaii. Overall Mr. Heilig shined brightly in comparison with the only other candidate due to his approach to understanding the needs of the university. Furthermore he demonstrated the knowledge and ability to organize and implement systems that will guide our great university in a positive and progressive direction for the future. Please consider this letter as my personal recommendation for this candidate and also my recommendation on behalf of the student body here at HCC and UH Hilo.

Mahalo,

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*Erik Beach
AAS Agriculture
President, Student Government AS UH Hawaii Community College
President, Justice Club Hawaii Community College*



Presidential Candidate Feedback

1 message

Calvin Black <calvin22@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Wed, Oct 2, 2024 at 9:17 AM

Good morning,

I'd like to provide short feedback regarding the two candidates for UH president. Wendy seems more qualified, more knowledgeable, and better equipped to lead UH than Julian. Many or most of Julian's answers to questions, and his speech at the open forums, seemed filled with fluff about "listening to constituents," which to be clear is absolutely necessary, but in this case felt more like he was just saying what he knew people would want to hear rather than articulating any clear vision or path forward. Despite Julian's extensive CV, Wendy's background and work history seem more relevant to the position. Therefore, my recommendation and support is for Wendy to be the next UH president.

Mahalo.

--

Calvin Black

Financial Aid Manager



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SAVE CONTACT



Presidential candidates review

1 message

Rachael Downham <rdownham@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Wed, Oct 2, 2024 at 9:52 AM

Wendy Hensel

As a lawyer, she knows the legislative components of running a university - good. Her responses to questions were very diplomatic and long, which I think is a reflection of the high caliber stakes CUNY has as a university. I fear though, that this is just a last pit stop on her road to retiring to her vacation home on Big Island. She would no doubt make a great leader, but my judgement feels as though she would represent administrators and staff more than students themselves, the priority of the institution.

Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig

His numerous degrees including a PhD are impressive along with the success stats for projects/initiatives completed at both universities in Michigan and Kentucky. Data like that is hard to beat. I appreciated his candid approach to the forum. Answers were less robotic and more genuine. His support of grad student unions are ideal to protect us and the students we teach, who will eventually become grad students themselves. He is young and has the potential to stay in the system and make tangible change. His experience dealing with legislators first hand and position as a higher education news correspondent is impressive.

My recommendation would be Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig for the position of the next President for the University of Hawai'i system.

Rachael L. Downham, PhD Student
Member of Division of Student Success
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Outstanding candidates; one is more suitable than the other

1 message

Ian Evans <I.M.Evans@massey.ac.nz>
To: "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Wed, Oct 2, 2024 at 2:49 PM

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. I attended both of the candidates' 90-minute forums on the UH Manoa campus. These presentations were both very interesting and informative and I applaud the search committee for selecting two outstanding candidates, both eminently qualified.

I have a strong sense of commitment to UH—I was first appointed to the Department of Psychology in 1970 and rose to become a tenured full professor, a consultant to the Hawaii State Department of Health, and President of the Hawaii Psychological Association. Since then I have taught in two other major research universities, one of them overseas. I have wide university management experience as well as a strong academic, Federal grants, and research record. Thus I found the search process fascinating and encouraging.

Wendy Hensel has all the right academic qualifications and leadership experience. She was personable, efficient, direct, honest in her answers, and handled all the difficult questions well.

Julian Heilig was affable, somewhat more theatrical, and I felt him to be a trustworthy person with an academic background in education, which I value. However my opinion was that he lacked the gravitas to be able to be an effective leader of our complex university system in our diverse, dynamic, but always challenging community. He sometimes waffled with his answers, tried too hard to appeal to the very serious need for greater attention to Native Hawaiian issues (yes, he had done some homework, but his analyses were superficial). He did not appear to have specific strategies for dealing with the different interest groups across the university. He was very likeable. I think he would be a good Provost. I think students would like him interpersonally and his values were excellent. But for the position of President he did not seem anything like as capable a candidates as Dr. Hensel.

Wendy Hansel's record of achievements is outstanding and her experiences as an academic manager are impeccable—CUNY is a tough setting: I know, I left UH to be a director of clinical training at the State University of New York and had many colleagues at CCNY. She had a certain assured bearing and confidence without a hint of arrogance or self-interest. Her answers to questions were crisp and to the point. I believe she would make a fine President for our university and be able to provide strong leadership into the future.

Thank you again for such an open and inclusive search process.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Evans

Ian M. Evans, PhD FRSNZ
Professor Emeritus
School of Psychology
Massey University
New Zealand &
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UH presidential search feedback.

1 message

Brennan Low <brennanv@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Wed, Oct 2, 2024 at 3:35 PM

Thanks for bringing both candidates to all the campuses so that we could get a chance to hear their views/perspectives. Based on the two meet and greets in Hilo, and the online sessions, I think there is a clear winning. I want to throw my support behind Wendy Hensel. She seemed dedicated and competent, and had some practical ideas that could be immediately applied to help UH meet enrollment challenges. Also, Ms. Hensel **already has ties to Hawaii** - owning a house in Kona. At UH Hilo, we have frequently imported candidates to fill high-ranking positions, only to have them depart after a relatively short tenure. That is a very costly result of an expensive national search. The importance of UH being a **system** of many campuses came across in Ms. Hensel's presentation. When I asked if it made sense to have a 4 year college 3 blocks away from a community college, she pointed to some sensible shared support services, like the library and the gym. She is also a big fan of AI, and tailoring our degree programs to meet emerging employer demands. Since UH Hilo is a data science center of excellence, I think there is a lot of potential in this area.

Despite being asked directly about the '800 lb gorilla' that is Mānoa's overpowering presence within the UH system, Mr. Vasquez-Heilig's response didn't inspire confidence that outer island campuses concerns will be top of mind. He spent time talking about enjoying Aloha stadium 20 years ago, and name-dropping some (famous?) north shore restaurants — to a Hawai'i island audience. That didn't resonate with me. Maybe it worked on Maui or Kauai. Mr. Vasquez-Heilig also declined to share any specific ideas or programs that were successful elsewhere, instead providing general responses about listening, community, et cetera. I'm not sure if more 'listening tours' is the best approach. He definitely 'talks the talk', but how applicable is a willingness to 'revisit colonial narratives' in the task of educating students for gainful employment? I'm also concerned that Mr. Vasquez-Heilig's admitted union bias may be problematical when dealing with UH's negotiations with HGEA. Will he be impartial? Donna Mercado Kim will certainly be holding the feet of whomever is appointed to the fire.

That's my \$0.02. Mahalo for reading my blog.

Aloha ~ B

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Mr. Brennan Veith Low | Web Services | [University of Hawaii at Hilo](#)
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Feedback on Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig

1 message

Jackie <jackieleeala20@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Oct 4, 2024 at 5:47 PM

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

Dr. Heilig is deeply committed to leading the University of Hawaii. After listening to Dr. Heilig's presentation at UH Manoa and watching the recording of the Q and A segment at UH Hilo, I am convinced he has the crucial qualities to lead our University of Hawaii system.

As a kama'āina, born and raised in Hawaii, I care about the future of UH and its responsibility to educate the next generation. I am confident Dr. Heilig understands the weight of this kuleana and can carry that weight to reach the heights of achievement that our youth deserve.

As a parent of a child who is an undergraduate at a college on the continent, I would urge my child to apply to graduate school at UH if Dr. Heilig becomes president, because of his commitment to providing students with quality learning opportunities and the necessary supports to succeed.

As a public school educator, I appreciate Dr. Heilig's accomplishments at the College of Education at Kentucky, where they doubled first-year enrollment and increased faculty diversity by 20 percent in three years.

In contrast, as a graduate of the City University of New York (CUNY), I was excited to listen to Dr. Hensel, but I ended up feeling unsettled throughout her presentation. On a personal level, I was disappointed with Dr. Hensel's reference to the student body of my alma mater. She used our diverse CUNY population as a prop, so she could imply that she could work successfully with the diverse population of UH. Serving as an administrator in a diverse system in New York City does not automatically qualify Dr. Hensel to work with our population in Hawaii. I am a product of two distinct communities, Hawaii and CUNY, and I know that serving the CUNY community is VERY different than serving the UH community. Dr. Hensel's shallow thinking would not be good for UH and would inevitably lead to conflicts with our community of students, staff, faculty, and citizens of Hawaii.

Dr. Heilig has a strong track record of examining the needs of his community, problem solving, and meeting the needs and goals of the people, community and institutions he's served. Dr. Heilig has demonstrated that he would be a dedicated, thoughtful, effective, and pono leader, whom people would respect, even in times of disagreement, because he would be willing to listen to, consider, weigh, and process multiple perspectives and then make sound decisions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to learn about both candidates and to advocate for the person who would best lead our beloved University of Hawaii.

Me ka ha'aha'a,
Jackie L.A.



testimony for UH President search

1 message

John Gregory Learned <jlearned@hawaii.edu>

Fri, Oct 4, 2024 at 4:28 PM

To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Cc: "John G. Learned" <jlearned@hawaii.edu>

Dear BOR:

Making it short, I would like to express my strong support for Julian Vasquez Heilig for UH President.

Julian will do a great job with leading and promoting the needs of UH to the legislature. Wendy is fine, but my judgement from long years of experience at UH is that Julian will be more effective in leadership, with the legislature and as a public representative of the university.

Respectfully,

John Learned

Professor of Physics, UHM



Why is there not even one Hawaii-connected candidate

1 message

Vic Varis <victorvaris@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Oct 4, 2024 at 7:36 AM

Aloha,

Simply put, I am disappointed in this day and time that we cannot locate any qualified candidates with connections to our island and culture.

The era we're in is different than nearly any other in the past 100 years as Hawaii identity and culture are rising more than ever.

To me proceeding with the current candidates is a concession that makes a statement- We don't trust Hawaiians enough to lead the education future of our islands.

My Hope is the committee will take a second look, refocus and try again.

Mahalo and Aloha,
Victor Varis,
MS Post Secondary, Adult, Continuing Education

Testimony: Recommendation for UH President

1 message

Ka`ōlinokaimana Yasuoka <kaolinokaimana@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Oct 4, 2024 at 5:53 PM

October 4, 2024

TO: University of Hawai'i Board of Regents
Presidential Candidate Selection

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

After attending both presidential candidate forums, **I recommend the UH President position be given to Julian Vasquez Heilig.**

In order to dig a little deeper into Dr. Vasquez Heilig's philosophies and pedagogies I did some additional research.

Why?

I believe that any Presidential candidate can work and rework their speeches to the community to attempt to say what they believe constituents want to hear. It is therefore up to us to "vet" and examine whether the candidates' words match their actions within the communities that they supported in the past and analyze whether they are in alignment with the University of Hawai'i's initiative to authentically become a initiative to advance the 10-campus system's commitment to "becoming an Indigenous-serving and Indigenous-centered institution."

Selecting a President that will work together with the newly appointed Director of Hawai'i Papa o Ke Ao, Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu Punihei Lipe

It is critical that the Presidential candidate selected shares Director Lipe's passion "to help cultivate a strong, resilient, and responsive community that uplifts Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i (University of Hawai'i) as a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning, rooted in aloha 'āina." Furthermore, Director Lipe's commitment "to ensure the preservation and continuation of Hawai'i's cherished practices for generations to come," will also require community and the UH President's support.

It will take a special Presidential candidate to lead the Native Hawaiian Place of Learning UH initiative. It means that humility is needed, a passion to learn from and support the community. It also requires that the candidate have knowledge about Kanaka `Ōiwi critical race theory, and practices for addressing the educational needs of Hawaii's indigenous and marginalized populations.

Hawai'i is unique and requires someone who is willing to support what makes Hawai'i unique, rather than a leader who is intent on re-centering colonizer, western-American, oppressive acculturation practices. Between Dr. Wendy Hensel, and Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig, Vasquez

Heilig's work stands out as being the one more closely aligned to the community-based leadership that UH needs.

As a former Hawaiian Culture-based Charter School educator, and as someone who has observed friends and colleagues grow and thrive through being a part of the process of building educational foundations built upon `āina-based, place-focused, culturally responsive education, I place my support for the presidential candidate whose work exemplifies support of educators, students, and communities, namely Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig.

I support Vasquez Heilig's "bottom-up" approach to building a strong, integrated, educational system/community. He recognizes the importance of community-based educational policies, and the need to ensure that traditionally marginalized voices have a space at the table where their thoughts, ideas, reflections, and analysis can live.

Towards this end, UH needs to ensure that it **does not** select a president with a top-down, and/or private-controlled approach to leadership. Dr. Wendy Hensel's pre-formulated agenda gave off the vibe that she has a top-down, need to be in control approach to leadership. (I was greatly concerned that students she taught felt that she was condescending. This is concerning because one's actions speak louder than how one attempts to frame one's self when trying to "win" a university president's position.)

A President that invites community voices to be part of the solution—to participate in the process, is imperative because every community's needs differ. The people who actively work within each community understand best their community's needs. Therefore "the bottoms up" approach that Vasquez Heilig references in his paper *What Instead?: Reframing the Debate About Charter Schools, Teach For America, and High-Stakes Testing* is an approach that aligns with having a capacity to work together with, to listen to, and to do the work in the name of each unique community. Unilateral, across the board, need to be in control, power-based decision making, is **detrimental** to addressing the needs of each institution within the UH system. Additionally, forcing all programs into a one-size-fits all approach doesn't make sense for the wide and varied needs of each program within the UH System.

As an educator who was part of the first Ka Lama o ke Kaiāulu cohort under the leadership of Dr. Margie Ma`aka, and Dr. Kathryn Au, I came to see the value of creating a community-attuned, community-based education program to address the needs of families and students within the Nānākuli and Wai`ānae communities. If every education program at UH was designed to be exactly the same, a cookie-cutter approach, then I wouldn't have left my program with the foundational tools I needed to work at community focused, Hawaiian culture-based schools.

There are many innovative programs within the University of Hawai'i system. Allowing these programs to continue to thrive with high levels of autonomy is essential for continuing the research (often cited), to encourage continued and sustained innovation, to continue to allow the wide, varied, successful programs within the UH system to continue to thrive. Remembering that **it's the people**, the educators, the students—the knowledge, the passion that they bring; the community engagement, and community support that make these programs and projects a success is integral to understanding the academic culture within the University of Hawai'i.

Listening

Between the two candidates, the one who showed a willingness to interact, and listen to the community, who didn't come touting their own personal agendas, was the second candidate Vasquez Heilig. Candidate Wendy Hensel, came in with an all too strong voice, all knowing, filled with answers on what the UH community needed persona. How can a President candidate know what the Hawai'i community needs, what the UH educational community needs simply from watching one PBS documentary about Hawai'i? The communities across Hawai'i are so different. I was also greatly concerned with Dr. Hensel's push for online learning when here in Hawai'i we saw how much disparity online/virtual learning created during the pandemic. Furthermore, although some students thrive in virtual learning communities, the need to build inter-personal relationships, to build in-person learning communities, that sense of belonging and sense of aloha that one builds while being together with a professor in a classroom, needs to continue to be a valued and a prioritized part of the UH learning experience. I for one am elated to see so many students once again in-person, on campus, connecting and relating with each other and their professors, building lifelong friendships—building that total sense of well being that can leave the on-line learners wanting.

A critical document that the UH Board of Regents need to examine in their selection of the next UH President is the HiDOE's Nā Hopena A`o document. Here is a compressed explanation from the Nā Hopena A`o website:

Policy E-3: Nā Hopena A`o (HĀ)

Nā Hopena A`o ("HĀ") is a framework of outcomes that reflects the Department of Education's core values and beliefs in action throughout the public educational system of Hawaii. The Department of Education works together as a system that includes everyone in the broader community to develop the competencies that strengthen a sense of belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, total-well-being and Hawaii ("BREATH") in ourselves, students and others. With a foundation in Hawaiian values, language, culture and history, HĀ reflects the uniqueness of Hawaii and is meaningful in all places of learning. HĀ supports a holistic learning process with universal appeal and application to guide learners and leaders in the entire school community.

The following guiding principles should lead all efforts to use HĀ as a comprehensive outcomes framework:

- *All six outcomes are interdependent and should not be used separately*
- *Support systems and appropriate resources should be in place for successful and thoughtful implementation*
- *Planning and preparation should be inclusive, collective and in a timeframe that is sensitive to the needs of schools and their communities*
- *Current examples of HĀ in practice can be drawn on as sources for expertise*
- *All members of the school community share in the leadership of HĀ*

Rationale:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive outcomes framework to be used by those who are developing the academic achievement, character, physical and social-emotional well-being of all our students to the fullest potential.

[Approved: 06/16/15]

Although technically designed for use in all HiDOE classrooms, when professors make it a part of the UH classroom experience, it goes a long way towards building that total sense of well being, and also can be a component in assessing how UH is doing in fulfilling their initiative to be a Native Hawaiian place of learning.

Actions that Support One's Words—Because Everything Speaks

Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig's various educational writings provide us the opportunity to see the actions that he has taken across time. His work, his words, his actions reveal that he is the candidate that would be able to develop the Hā-B.R.E.A.T.H. competencies shared above. These competencies are essential for Hawai'i student success, but can really be applied to all students who choose Hawai'i as their place of learning because it is "holistic" with "universal appeal."

Towards this end, it is essential that the UH President selected understands the impacts of oppressive ways of educating students, which requires a willingness and openness to work with the community, a President who is not racist, and does not support racist philosophies and pedagogies.

The importance of selecting the right leader for the UH System

How critical is it that the University of Hawai'i selects the right candidate? Administrators of educational systems hold a lot of power. How they use that power, whether they see it as a way to empower unilateral problem solving and decision making, or if they value community voices, community input will bring forth completely different results.

Having lived through a school year with an administrative leader that arrived with a vision, oblivious to the needs of families, students, with an it's my way, or take the highway perspective, resulted in a completely changed school culture, one that shifted our school away from innovation, away from being place-based, to a school culture that often felt gender biased, racially discriminating, where bullying was not stemmed, and the indigenous students were often left without ways to build their culture based identity except for the few months of the school year that they spent with the school's Hawaiian culture kumu. The school's leadership change was like night and day. The previous leader had come up the school's ranks spending years as a kindergarten teacher, music teacher, VP then Principal. He was dedicated to the school's mission, vision, and core principals. Teacher retention was high. The school's culture was positive. I didn't think it was possible for a Principal to be hired that did not understand how Hawai'i's charter school system works—providing alternative educational pathways that are innovative, place-based, not focused on high-stakes testing but instead seeking alternative ways to measure school success because of the understanding that students are multi-dimensional, that students arrive in our classrooms with expertise, that the regular "standards" shouldn't be held as "holier than thou." It exemplified what can happen when a Principal is selected that is completely disconnected with the school's original culture, disconnected and out of tune with Hawai'i's history of acculturation and acclimation. Decades of progress was slashed by one poor leadership choice. We must prevent this from happening at this critical time in the life of higher education. Racism, bullying/power struggle practices, condescension, minimization, oppression and repression can not be perpetuated on the University of Hawai'i campus.

Due to time constraints I will bring my testimony to an end here.

O wau nō me ka ha`aha`a,
Alison Ka`ōlinokaimana Yasuoka
(UH COE Grad Student)

References

Heilig, J. V., Brewer, T. J., & White, T. (2018). What Instead?: Reframing the Debate About Charter Schools, Teach For America, and High-Stakes Testing. *Counterpoints*, 523, 201–217.

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Office of Hawaiian Education (OHE). Nā Hopena A'o (HĀ). HiDOE website. <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/HawaiianEducation/Pages/HA.aspx#:~:text=With%20a%20foundation%20in%20Hawaiian,in%20the%20entire%20school%20community.>

UH News. *Punihei Lipe selected to lead systemwide Native Hawaiian initiative.* University of Hawai'i News Website. July 23, 2024. <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2024/07/23/lipe-selected-systemwide-native-hawaiian-initiative/#:~:text=Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu%20Punihei%20Lipe%20has%20been,serving%20and%20Indigenous%2Dcentered%20institution.>



UH President candidates

1 message

Sharon Young <sharonlouise53@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Fri, Oct 4, 2024 at 1:50 PM

I found Wendy Hensel very open and caring of the public/teachers/students. She seems to be more in tune with "Hawaiian culture ". Also, the fact that she has a home on the Big Island makes her more closely allined with our culture. I was impressed by her caring and open attitude. I think she would be a real asset for UH and our community. She seems to be a community builder.

I was not impressed with Mr. Heilig. I found him lacking in openness and concern for the community. The fact that he is still raising children in school will put greater economic pressure on him, since he seems to want his kids to go to Punahou. I hope he is not chosen to lead UH .

Aloha, Sharon Young
Sent from my iPhone



Presidential Search

1 message

Virginia Hinshaw <vhinshaw@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Sat, Oct 5, 2024 at 5:45 PM

Aloha! Based on the public forums by the two finalists, along with the background information, Wendy F. Hensel seemed the most capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of the UH President position. She has highly relevant professional experience, including administrative leadership at a system level, dealing with a wide range of responsibilities (budget, student affairs, congressional interactions, etc.) She has served in a range of positions within universities as well, so that insight would enable her to understand the needs of students, staff, and faculty. Her presentation and responses to questions were thoughtful, concise, reasoned, and articulate. Her enthusiasm for the position was also evident. Plus, she already has a personal connection to Hawai'i. She seemed well aware of the opportunities and the challenges of the position and ready to assume both. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide input.

Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor Emerita University of Hawai'i Mānoa



President finalist feedback

Elizabeth Weitz <eaweitz@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Wed, Oct 9, 2024 at 3:55 PM

Aloha,

Today I read the Civil Beat covering of candidate Wendy Hensel's retaliation against an employee. In response, I decisively ask the university to not choose this candidate.

Character is among the most important qualities we seek in a leader. Of course, both candidates vow to lead with character, but how can we know? The best predictor of a person's character is their past behavior. All leaders will face criticism; the mark of a good leader is how they respond to it. *Retaliation is the worst possible outcome to criticism.* This character trait is horrifying, and is a clear mark that progress will be confronted by a culture of fear that retaliation may occur again. A leader who retaliates due to criticism will only lead us into darkness.

Mahalo for your consideration,
Elizabeth Weitz

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Elizabeth Weitz
Graduate Student in Psychology
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa



President Search Testimony from Teach For America Hawai'i

1 message

Lee, Joshua <Joshua.Lee@teachforamerica.org>
To: "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>
Cc: "Baldemor, Jill" <jill.baldemor@teachforamerica.org>

Sat, Oct 12, 2024 at 10:59 AM

Aloha,

Please see attached for testimony submitted on behalf of Teach For America Hawai'i for the Special Board Meeting scheduled for October 16, 2024.

Regards,

Joshua Lee

 **Letter to Board of Regents from TFA.pdf**
105K

REGIONAL OFFICE

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@TeachForAmericaHawaii



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An AmeriCorps Program

October 12, 2024

University of Hawai'i Board of Regents
University of Hawai'i
2444 Dole Street
Bachman Hall 209
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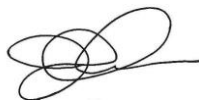
Aloha Chair Lee and members of the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents,

Mahalo to all of you for your leadership in selecting the next President of the University of Hawai'i. All of us in the educational community understand the importance of this selection for the University and for the continuation of President Lassner's work to provide educational equity to haumana across Hawai'i.

Teach for America Hawai'i has been privileged to be part of that work for nearly two decades through our partnerships with public schools in the most underserved districts in Hawai'i. We have introduced the joy of teaching to 1,155 young professionals, including over 261 kama'āina and Kānaka Maoli, who commit to becoming TFA Hawai'i Corps Members. We have seen 67% of them remain in the classroom or in the field of education, dedicated to providing opportunities for success in communities they have come to love. TFA Hawai'i alumni have been recognized for excellence and innovation in education, and have risen to the call to lead systems change to increase educational equity in Hawai'i.

We are excited to see two finalists who advance equity, innovation, and inclusion throughout their academic careers, and we are eager to partner and collaborate with the University. We hope the next University President is encouraged to see us as a resource and a partner as Hawai'i marches ever more firmly toward the vision that one day, all keiki will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

Very sincerely,



Jeff Arce
Regional Board Chair
Teach For America Hawai'i



H. Mitch D'Olier
Regional Board, Chair Emeritus
Teach For America Hawai'i



Jill Baldemor
Executive Director
Teach For America Hawai'i

Testimony in support of Dr. Vasquez Heilig's candidacy

1 message

Lois Yamauchi <yamauchi@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Sun, Oct 13, 2024 at 8:08 PM

Dear University of Hawai'i Regents,

I am writing to submit comments about the two finalists for the University President and Mānoa chancellor position. I am a professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Psychology in Mānoa's College of Education. I have taught at the University for 30 years. I grew up in Hawai'i and am an alumna of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

I watched both candidates' O'ahu public forums online. I watched Dr. Vasquez Heilig's presentation live and viewed the recording of Dr. Hensel's.

Comparing the two candidates' backgrounds and presentations, I believe that Dr. Vasquez Heilig will be a stronger leader of our system and campus. His background in education and diversity issues are valuable as we move forward to enact our mission to provide broad educational opportunities that nurture the personal success, leadership capacity and positive engagement of all Hawai'i's residents, while fulfilling our commitment to the indigenous Hawaiian people and their culture.

Dr. Vasquez Heilig demonstrated a stronger commitment to our aspiration to become a Hawaiian place of learning. He read books and articles by Hawaiian scholars about Hawai'i's culture and history and integrated these into his presentation. On the other hand, when Dr. Hensel was asked what she had read about Hawaiian culture and history and which authors she had read, she could not name any scholars and said that she had watched two documentaries. This was disappointing, given that she has a residence on Hawai'i island. I would have thought she would have known of our focus on the Indigenous people of our islands. Dr. Hensel also mispronounced some of the Hawaiian values she included in her responses.

In a similar way, when Dr. Hensel was asked about how she would expand Mānoa's endeavors as a land grant institution, she responded that she did not know much about land grant institutions, but is supportive and would learn. Again, this was disappointing. I would have assumed that a finalist would have been prepared for a question like this, even if they did not have direct experiences. In contrast, Dr. Vasquez Heilig has experience at a land-grant institution and talked about how he would bring these experiences to Hawai'i.

I know that my Dean, Nathan Murata, was not happy that Dr. Vasquez Heilig questioned why Leeward Community College has a 3+1 teacher education program with Chaminade University, instead of UH Mānoa or West O'ahu. However, this did not bother me as it shows that Dr. Vasquez Heilig is willing to openly question why things are the way they are, when they should be different. According to Dean Murata, Leeward did not invite Mānoa's College of Education to even talk about such a proposal before they went forward with Chaminade. We are currently in the process of developing such a program with Leeward and the other community colleges.

In sum, I believe Dr. Vasquez Heilig will bring a passionate and informed voice for the University system and Mānoa's leadership. Dr. Vasquez Heilig can move us forward in our mission to serve and honor Native

Hawaiians, while focusing on our commitment to education, diversity and equity for all people in our State.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Aloha,

Lois A. Yamauchi
Professor and Chair
Educational Psychology
University of Hawai'i Mānoa



Testimony for Wednesday Oct 14th

1 message

Marguerite Butler <mbutler808@gmail.com>

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 8:26 AM

To: Zoom on behalf of Board of Regents <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Cc: Allen Allison <allison@hawaii.edu>, "Michael G. Hadfield" <hadfield@hawaii.edu>, Mark Burgman <mburgman@hawaii.edu>

Aloha BoR,

Enclosed please find our testimony on the candidates for the search for President of the University of Hawaii.

Sincerely,
Marguerite Butler

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Marguerite A. Butler
Professor

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<http://manoa.hawaii.edu/biology/people/marguerite-butler>
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~mbutler>

 **BOR Testimony on Presidential Search-on time .pdf**
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TO: Board of Regents, University of Hawai'i

RE: Item IV. President Finalist Interviews

In support of Julian Vasquez Heilig first, Wendy Hensel second, with discussion on options

The Regents have a great responsibility in selecting the next President of the University of Hawaii. We appreciate the time and care put into this, and appreciate the opportunity to offer our perspective as faculty of the Manoa campus, providing testimony in our individual capacities.

At a moment like this, it helps to remember former UH President Al Simone's definition – ***"in every situation, a University is of the faculty, for the students, and by the administration"***

Above all else, **faculty are looking for academic leadership**, especially as this next President will hire the next Chancellor of Mānoa, and together oversee a reorganization that will redefine the University of Hawaii and frame the possibilities for Mānoa's impact and aspirations.

We hear from colleagues that there are mixed opinions on the candidates. There are four possible outcomes for the current search: offer the position to Wendy Hensel, to Julian Vasquez Heilig, interview more candidates from the list of 12, or declare the search failed and select an internal interim President. **We urge the Regents to make every effort to bring the search to a successful conclusion, and avoid declaring a failed search.**

With respect, we offer these observations and thoughts on the alternatives, recognizing that as faculty we are not privy to all of the information available to Regents.

Wendy Hensel

Faculty are impressed that she holds the position of University Provost (chief academic officer and chief executive of the Office of Academic Affairs) at the City University of New York, which is a much larger System than UH. Notably, with the Chancellor's team, she testified successfully for restoration of CUNY's budget with the NY City Council. She lists multiple efforts but often without outcomes or measures of success.

She was previously Provost and Dean of Law at Georgia State University, which is a non-union university, and where most of her experience derives from.

She was very well-spoken, shared some of her values but lacked specifics, acknowledged diversity within CUNY but gave no details of initiatives or ideas for implementation. Some faculty felt she over-emphasized AI. She is an inward facing Provost of a system that includes an R1 graduate institution (the CUNY Graduate Center). The move to UH would be a promotion.

She rose through the ranks quickly after entering administration. Her tenure at top administrative levels has been relatively brief.

Complaints by faculty cross the desk of any Provost, and an article in the Sunday Honolulu Star-Advertiser states there was no direct involvement by Hensel in the allegation of retaliation against a law faculty member at Georgia State University shortly after she was promoted from Dean to Provost. However, two points are instructive. The appearance of cronyism could have been avoided altogether if Hensel had not appointed a close personal friend to serve as interim dean of Law. While the post-tenure review was corrected and the faculty member ultimately prevailed, it could have been handled more collegially. The characterization by Hensel of the incident as a "non event" is probably not one that is shared by the faculty member, who lost time, experienced unnecessary stress, and spent effort in the year required to correct their record.

Julian Vasquez Heilig

Heilig came across as energetic, straight-talking and innovative. He provided many concrete examples to illustrate ideas, for example, using big data to identify at-risk students, and growing student research across the system. He focused on team-building; building partnerships; building relationships with the legislature.

During the breakfast, he showed an understanding of complex operational issues related to research, recognized the significance of faculty concerns, and responded in a straightforward, strategic, and sensible manner.

He relayed his understanding of Native Hawaiian Place of Learning, attempting to relate his personal background to Hawaii. It is very difficult for outsiders to speak on these issues.

Like Hensel, the primary criticism of Heilig is moving positions every few years as he's moved up the leadership ladder. He is a young administrator with impressive accomplishments at each post at several R1 and R2 institutions. He is an inward facing provost at an R2 institution, the office of the UH President would be a promotion.

Interview additional candidates

Faculty have no information on this option.

Declare a failed search; appoint an interim President

Both finalists are qualified for the job of President, but there is no clear favorite. One possibility is that if faculty had more time with the candidates, opinions may improve with vetting. In this situation, the regents have a difficult decision ahead, and we wish to offer these additional thoughts.

We see no clear benefit of declaring a failed search:

- The main reason to try again at a future date is the likelihood of obtaining a better pool. However, the University of Hawaii does not have a good reputation for leadership opportunities. We could easily do worse.

Yet, there are potential harms:

- The most important immediate tasks for the new President, hiring a Mānoa Chancellor and returning services that support research, teaching, and outreach to Mānoa, cannot be done by an interim.
- We do not have a deep bench. The appointment of an interim President coupled with delayed progress on our most important tasks risks further decline in morale.
- Declaring a failed search may in fact lower the quality of the next pool.

Recommendation:

We are at a time of uncertainty, with troubling societal and economic trends resulting in local residents being priced out of housing and leaving the state, while the state is increasingly relying on tourism to drive our economy. With a strong leader, UH may lead the state to a better future. **We urge the Regents to move forward to bring this current search to a successful conclusion, and identify the strongest candidate in leadership and vision.**

We recommend as first choice: **Julian Vasquez Heilig** for his demonstration of academic leadership and innovation, his collaborative approach with faculty and emphasis on being a "team builder and team player". He demonstrated an understanding of the needs of research, consistent with an impressive record of achievement both as an administrator and scholar, which is all the more impressive given his time since PhD, and that he remains active in scholarship as an administrator. This kind of success does not occur without the development of people and teams. His focus on equity and excellence in education and work with minority populations are highly relevant to UH. His success in minority retention is very impressive. Finally his demeanor and respect for culture will serve well in building relationships to all communities and outside audiences including the legislature.

For a second choice, we ask the Regents to consider **Wendy Hensel**, who is also highly qualified and has an impressive career even though she did not demonstrate academic leadership nor discuss her experiences to the same degree of clarity and detail.

In conclusion, an innovative, energetic candidate, committed to our missions, who can understand our community and context may be just the right candidate for this time. Faculty are eager to work toward a better future for the University of Hawaii.

Mahalo nui loa,

Marguerite Butler, Professor, School of Life Sciences

Allen Allison, Affiliate Graduate Faculty and Senior Curator of Zoology, Bishop Museum

Michael G. Hadfield, Professor of Biology Emeritus and Researcher, Pacific Biosciences
Research Center, SOEST

Mark Burgman, Professor, Director, School of Life Sciences



Here's my view on the selection for the new President of the University of Hawai`i

1 message

Nathan C <2bdrmrntl@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 12:49 PM

Regents,

I graduated from the University of Hawai`i about 50 years ago. I've lived all my life in Honolulu and attended a public school. I read the resumes of both candidates and it's very clear who the best candidate for this job is. Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig is the obvious choice. Wendy F. Hensel is someone in the legal field who happened to be appointed to positions at colleges.

Dr. Vasquez Heilig has been in the education/administrative field since college. His purpose and goal is focused. He has given expert testimonies on topics relating to education and administration. He would best understand the unique situation and position at UH. The history, the diversity, the challenges of being in the middle of the Pacific region, the people.

I look forward to your wise choice in this important matter.

Mahalo.

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

*****All written testimony submitted are public documents. Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

Kevin Faccenda

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

faccenda@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Comments Only

Your Testimony/Comments

As I've been following the presidential search I've become more and more concerned with the two current finalists for the position. I do not believe either is prepared, nor qualified to hold this position. Neither applicant appears to embrace UH as a place of Hawaiian learning and some comments have actively discounted native Hawaiians. UH should not be led by a lawyer, but by an educator.

I strongly recommend rejecting both applicants and conducting new interviews to find a president whose motives and ethics align with making UH a place of Hawaiian learning.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kevin Faccenda

Your Testimony (pdf or word)

No file attached

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

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Your Name (required) *

Caitlin Fowlkes

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

cfowlkes@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

V.A. Personnel Action on the Selection and Compensation of the President of the University of Hawaii

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

During the course of the candidate visits both candidates expressed views that showed a lack of understanding of the diverse population in Hawai'i. After attending both open houses, and forums, and having private conversations with both candidates, I do not think that either candidate would represent the UH system well.

Your Testimony (pdf or word)

No file attached

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

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Your Name (required) *

Isabelle Eiser (GSO Secretary), Arby Barone (GSO Academic Affairs Chair), Anupama Reddy (GSO Chair for Academic Enrichment and Merit), Alexander Tang (GSO Information and Communications Chair)

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

gsopres@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

After attending the open house and several public forum events with both presidential search candidates, the Graduate Student Organization's Executive Council (GSO EC) at UH Mānoa would like to express serious concerns regarding the qualifications of either candidate to be fit for president of the University of Hawai'i system. During the course of the candidate visits both candidates expressed views that showed a lack of understanding of the diverse population in Hawai'i. Based on their comments, neither candidate demonstrated any effort to support UH as a native Hawaiian place of learning. Indeed, both candidates expressed opinions that pejoratively dismissed native and local populations as a potential pipeline in the development of higher education and administration in the UH system. Given the comments made by one candidate at the public forum implying that "native and local applicants are not currently qualified to hold high administrative posts like President of the UH system" and the reporting in Civil Beat [about the other candidate](#), the GSO EC finds both of these candidates lacking in key areas needed in UH administration such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion awareness in a state with a large indigenous population. Additionally, both candidates focused heavily on policies which favor decreasing faculty positions and increasing workload for graduate students without committing to any aid in the development of a graduate student union. The GSO EC strongly encourages the BOR to reject both candidates and appoint an interim President as they search for a candidate that will uphold the mission and values of the UH system.

Your Testimony (pdf or word)

No file attached

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

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*****All written testimony submitted are public documents. Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

Noelle Iati

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

noellemi@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

Neither Wendy Hensel, who has retaliated against a Black colleague for questioning her in her role at Georgia State (<https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/10/uh-president-candidate-targeted-black-law-professor-for-speaking-out-review-found/>), nor Julian Vasquez Heilig, who expressed dismissal that any Native Hawaiian or local candidates could be qualified for the position of president, are fit to be presidents of the UH system. They've shown themselves to put personal ambition over integrity, and neither candidate has displayed an interest in the unique needs of UH as an institution located on the occupied Hawaiian Islands. I strongly oppose the appointment of either candidate, and urge you to begin the search anew with Native Hawaiian concerns in mind.

Your Testimony (pdf or word)

No file attached



UH President Search Testimony

1 message

Mari Martinez <mm2046@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 12:20 PM

Aloha,

I would like to express serious concerns regarding the qualifications of either candidate to be fit for president of the University of Hawai'i system. Each candidate expressed views that showed a lack of understanding of the diverse population in Hawai'i. Based on their comments, neither candidate demonstrated any effort to support UH as a native Hawaiian place of learning. Both candidates expressed opinions that pejoratively dismissed native and local populations as a potential pipeline in the development of higher education and administration in the UH system. Given the comments made by one candidate at the public forum implying that "native and local applicants are not currently qualified to hold high administrative posts like President of the UH system," as well as the anti-collective bargaining history of one candidate and the reporting in Civil Beat [about the other candidate](#), it is clear that the BOR has a specific agenda they would like to push for this university, that is fiscally driven with little concern for quality of education, faculty or students. Bringing candidates that are clearly slash and cut candidates as well ones lacking in key areas needed in UH administration such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion awareness in a state with a large indigenous population is tone deaf at best. Additionally, both candidates focused heavily on policies which favor decreasing faculty positions and increasing workload for graduate students without committing to any aid in the development of a graduate student union. As a graduate student and graduate assistant I strongly encourage the BOR to reject both candidates and appoint an interim President as they search for a candidate that will uphold the mission and values of the UH system.

Concerned,

Mari Martinez

--

PhD Student in Performance Studies | University of Hawai'i at Manoa
UHM Center for South Asian Studies Coordinator



UH Presidential Search

1 message

Leo Oh <leo751a@gmail.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 7:41 AM

Of the two remaining candidates, Mr. Heilig appears to be better aligned with the vision and values of our local, diverse culture. He is a much better match, and without the controversy. The focus should be on our kids--not the President's headlines.

Please accept this vote for Mr. Heilig.

From a 4th generation resident who would love to see the grandchildren choose UH and stay in Hawaii. Mahalo.

Sent from my iPad



Pūko'a Council Testimony - Special Meeting UH Board of Regents

1 message

Lawrence Gora <lgora@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 10:45 AM

Aloha e BOR,

Please see **attached** Pūko'a Council testimony to the BOR Special Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, October 16, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. for your information and records.

Mahalo nui,
Keali'i Gora
Pūko'a Council Administrator
[2645 Dole Street](#) 101AC
Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone: (808) 956-0551
Web: hawaii.edu/pukoa

 **PC Testimony to BOR Oct 2 2024 FINAL.pdf**
50K

October 2, 2024

Aloha e Chair Lee, Members of the Board of Regents:

After careful thought and review of the two finalists for the UH President, Pūko‘a Council supports Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig as the new University of Hawai‘i President. While Pūko‘a Council was very disappointed that there were no Native Hawaiian or local candidates as one of the finalists for the UH President, however, Dr. Vasquez Heilig comes to this work with humility and great ideas for the future of UH System.

Here are the following critical and analytical viewpoints on why Dr. Vasquez Heilig has our full support.

Dr. Vasquez Heilig demonstrated a strong focus on community engagement and focus. He also has positive experiences in working with legislative bodies. This is vital to the University since fifty percent of our budget is appropriated by the legislature. Dr. Vasquez Heilig is committed to building relationships with the legislature and his approach has demonstrated that he will build those bridges.

He remarked that “It’s a different presidency at UH, as most presidents focus on donors and sports. What makes Hawai‘i special: 1) the UH President’s role is focused heavily on community” and he’ll be community focused and community engaged. Dr. Vasquez Heilig has a background in interacting with the legislature.

The second part he said is that 50% of the University of Hawai‘i budget comes from the legislature. Most states, only 10% comes from the legislature. He is committed to framing these conversations to build those relationships with the legislature. Building bridges. Collectively, we can get things done together in the short term and the long term.

Dr. Vasquez Heilig has strong alignment with the strategic imperative on kuleana, and in making the University a truly indigenous-serving institution. He believes that kuleana is the responsibility to community, and to the environment. While he does not share the same cultural intimacy, he does share the values, and he agreed that we should hold him accountable. He has respect for Hawai‘i, the ecology, people and

culture. He is committed to the important work we do which is about education for our people and he is additionally skilled in equity and scale.

Pūko‘a Council firmly believes he has all the substantive qualities in advancing the UH strategic plan, in particular imperative #1, kuleana.

Dr. Vasquez Heilig is supportive of the work of the Pūko‘a Council as well as in support of budget and fundraising.

Dr. Vasquez Heilig comes to this work with humility. He recognizes the unique values, culture, history, and he’s open to experiences to learn and grow in fulfilling that kuleana. Dr. Vasquez Heilig strongly believes that we have to emphasize collaborative relationships. Leadership has to work. He is open to multiple means of building relationships. He has a vision for local impact, not just East or West, and for students on issues that may be difficult and challenging. He also is committed to working with all shared governance groups. He believes wholeheartedly the need to hear their truth. This work takes courage. He quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “The time is always right to do what is right.”

Overall, Pūko‘a Council feels Dr. Vasquez Heilig is the best choice to advocate for our needs, and will elevate the University of Hawai‘i to the next level. He will put our students, indigenous people, the academic institution, indigenous priorities, instruction, professional workforce and vocation and technical training first without losing sight of important research.

Based on the above-mentioned reasons and viewpoints, Pūko‘a Council strongly recommends Dr. Vasquez Heilig as the new University of Hawai‘i President.

Sincerely,


Keali‘i Gora

On behalf of the Pūko‘a Council

UH President Finalists - Feedback for BOR

1 message

Aimee Sato <aimeeys@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 8:48 AM

Aloha to the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents (BOR)

My name is Aimee Sato. I am a descendant of Japanese settlers, born and raised in Hawai'i in a multicultural community. I currently hold a faculty position at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with a responsibility to steward indigenous people and places. I have attended both weeks of public events for the two UH President finalists, and have looked into their CV, and past efforts that they have steered.

I STRONGLY submit support for Julian Vasquez Heilig, and believe that the BOR and selection committee should select Mr. Heilig as the next UH President. There are several reasons that have convinced me of his capabilities to meet the demands of the institution.

First and most logically, Mr. Heilig has experience, years of experience in University settings and transformational leadership. His resume speaks for itself and he seems passionate about what he has accomplished so far in his life to improve the quality of education for students.

Second and most strategically, Mr. Heilig has proved that he is a "Systems" thinker, which is a crucial quality we need in someone that will be managing a large and complicated system. We need a President that has the ability to step back and ask how and why the UH is doing things the way they are. Many of the problems I have ended up facing as both a student, staff, and faculty of the University is that there wasn't a clear system, or the system has not adapted to the times. I believe Mr. Heilig has the ability to be the catalyst for good system changes.

Third and most importantly, "Native Hawaiian Place of Learning (NHPoL)." Mr. Heilig's presentation was authentic, had heart, and showed that he was paying attention so far to what it meant for the University to become a NHPoL. I was moved to tears of hope, seeing his presentation. He showed visuals of his family, his children and his grandparents that have shaped him. I believe that he is multicultural and can have a better understanding of a multicultural environment such as Hawai'i. There was also a clear understanding of the struggle of indigenous and local people of Hawai'i. I appreciated his honesty that he doesn't have all the answers right now because he needs to listen to the community first. He also elevated the voices of indigenous people in the University system in his presentation, which shows me that he has respect and ability to uplift other voices.

In conclusion, I ask the BOR to take this letter of support for Julian Heilig into their consideration.

Mahalo,

Aimee Sato

*Indigenous Stewardship Specialist, [Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology](#)
Stewardship Coordinator, [He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve](#)
Address: [46-007 Lilipuna Rd Kāne'ohe, HI 96744](#)*



UH Candidates

1 message

Sharon <rana@hawaii.rr.com>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 10:26 AM

Dear Board of Regents,

I meet with both candidates and specifically asked them how they would deal with the Mauna Kea issue, since this is important to the community and many of your students. Wendy Hensel told me that a new group had been formed to deal with this, which included Hawaiian Cultural practitioners. She felt time should be given to this group to see if they could resolve the issues equitably.

When I asked Julian Vasquez-Heilig the same question he said he had no responsibility over the matter. Even though he may not have authority to make decisions on this issue the next President will need to find a good way to bring students/faculty/community members together regarding this culturally sensitive subject. His dismissive statement made me feel uncomfortable.

I found Ms. Hensel to be much more open and genuine than Mr. Vasques-Heilig, and I sensed a greater ability to use consensus building to get things done. Mr. Vasques-Heilig seemed more like a politician to me than a community builder; a person too vested in his own ego.

Neither candidate has a true grasp of our culture, but I believe consensus building is a huge part of bringing different sides together, and would improve the University experience for your students.

Sincerely,

Sharon Young

(808)226-9117

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

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Your Name (required) *

Ruge Zhao

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

rugezhaohawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

V.A. Personnel Action on the Selection and Compensation of the President of the University of Hawaii

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

As an international graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, I would like to express my concerns regarding the presidential search candidates. Having attended the forums and carefully listened to the candidates' remarks, I share the belief that neither candidate is suited to lead the University of Hawai'i system, especially given their apparent disregard for the values and diversity that define our institution.

One of the key reasons many of us, including international students, choose UH Mānoa is the university's commitment to being a Native Hawaiian place of learning, where different cultures and backgrounds are respected and celebrated. It was concerning to witness both candidates fail to recognize the importance of the native Hawaiian community and dismiss local applicants as unqualified for leadership roles. As an international student, I have been deeply enriched by the diverse perspectives and cultural richness of Hawai'i, and I believe it is essential that our university leadership values and nurtures these unique aspects of our community. A president who does not value this diversity undermines the university's mission and fails to represent the needs of its students, faculty, and the broader community.

Furthermore, the emphasis on increasing workloads for graduate students while reducing faculty positions, without any serious commitment to supporting a graduate student union, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the challenges we face.

International graduate students, in particular, often carry heavy teaching and research responsibilities while navigating complex visa regulations and financial constraints. The absence of meaningful support for our development and rights would make it even more difficult to maintain our academic contributions and personal well-being.

Testimony for October 16 Meeting

1 message

Derek Rainey <derekrai@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 10:02 PM

To the UH Board of Regents,

After attending the open house and several public forum events with both presidential search candidates, I would like to express serious concerns regarding the qualifications of either candidate as fit for president of the University of Hawai'i system. During the course of the candidate visits both candidates expressed views that showed a lack of understanding of the diverse population in Hawai'i. Based on their comments, neither candidate demonstrated any effort to support UH as a native Hawaiian place of learning. Indeed, both candidates expressed opinions that pejoratively dismissed native and local populations as a potential pipeline in the development of higher education and administration in the UH system. Given the comments made by one candidate at the public forum implying that "native and local applicants are not currently qualified to hold high administrative posts like President of the UH system" and the reporting in Civil Beat [about the other candidate](#), the GSO EC finds both of these candidates lacking in key areas needed in UH administration such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion awareness in a state with a large indigenous population. Additionally, both candidates focused heavily on policies which favor decreasing faculty positions and increasing workload for graduate students without committing to any aid in the development of a graduate student union. As a member of Academic Labor United, the as yet unrecognized union for UH graduate student workers, I am particularly concerned that either of these candidates would recognize the problem of low GA wages and yet share no proposals for how to work with current graduate students to address them. This board has already demonstrated its lack of concern or willingness to work with graduate students on these concerns, perhaps you will even appreciate candidates who have made no commitments on this front. However, for these reasons and others stated, I would strongly encourage the BOR to reject both candidates and appoint an interim President while they search for a candidate who will uphold the mission and values of the UH system.

Sincerely,

Derek Rainey



Testimony: UH Presidential Search

1 message

Rep. Amy A. Perruso <repperruso@capitol.hawaii.gov>
To: "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Mon, Oct 14, 2024 at 6:25 PM

Mahalo!



Presidential Search Testimony 1.docx

50K



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hale o nā Luna Makaʻāinana

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Testimony to the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents Regarding the Presidential Search Process

Aloha Chair Lee, Members of the Board of Regents, and UH Community,

I write today to express my full support for the ongoing presidential search process and to urge you to see it through to its conclusion. Like many across our islands, I have followed this process closely, and I am dismayed by the rumors circulating that there are efforts to derail or halt the process. Such attempts to undermine the integrity of an established process are deeply concerning and stand in stark contrast to the transparency and fairness that the University of Hawai'i should exemplify.

My dismay is rooted in both recent developments and past experiences. My father-in-law, Cecil Mackey, who was a candidate for the UH presidency in the 1990s, experienced firsthand the detrimental effects of a flawed process, which led him ultimately to decline the position. He, too, witnessed efforts to sabotage the process, a lack of integrity, and internal challenges that dissuaded him from taking the helm of this great institution. It was a missed opportunity, but more importantly, it was indicative of a pattern of behavior that reflects poorly on the institution's leadership.

These repeated patterns of acting in bad faith don't just affect individual candidates—they erode the University of Hawai'i's national and international reputation. As a public institution, UH is a cornerstone of our community, shaping the future of our state, while also contributing to a broader academic and research landscape. The Board of Regents has an obligation to protect and strengthen this reputation, ensuring that UH remains a respected leader in education and research.

Undermining the process, on the other hand, would not only damage this search but also leave long-lasting repercussions on our ability to attract top talent in the future. The university community—and the public—deserve a process that they can trust. A process rooted in integrity is crucial to preserving and enhancing UH's standing, especially in an increasingly competitive global academic environment.

The two finalists before you are accomplished leaders, both of whom would serve our university well. They have gone through a thorough vetting process, and I am confident



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hale o nā Luna Makaʻāinana

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

that the search committee has acted in good faith to bring forward the best candidates. I urge you to conclude this process with a selection of one of these two fine candidates and allow the mechanisms that were put in place to function as intended.

The University of Hawai'i deserves leadership that reflects the values of our state: fairness, transparency, and commitment to the greater good. This search process embodies those values, and I implore you to honor it, rather than succumb to the pressures that seek to undermine it.

Mahalo for your time and attention to this matter, and for your commitment to the future of the University of Hawai'i.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Perruso".

Amy Perruso
State Representative, District 46



Concerned for the UH Presidential Candidates

1 message

Jessie Kai <jessiek@hawaii.edu>

Tue, Oct 15, 2024 at 12:36 AM

To: "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Aloha nō kākou,

Thank you for allowing me to share my concerns about the UH presidential candidates Drs Wendy Hensel and Julian Vasquez Heilig.

Yes, I am very concerned and frankly very scared and worried that the voice and mind of our beloved institution will be of someone who does not resonate with who we are. Our acceptance and genuine love for each other here in Hawai'i regardless of differences sets us apart. In this world of chaos and hate, please keep Hawai'i and its hallmark institution a refuge for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Please select a president who will be the protector of compassion and integrity, and a provider of freedom, positivity and safety.

We, the residents of Hawai'i, have put our trust in the board or regents. Please do us right and extend the search for our next president. I'm sorry this request requires an interim president. But please do not marry our state to a president who does not respect our traditional values and beliefs.

Mahalo ā nui for allowing me to share my concerns.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Jessie Kai, PhD MS

Program Coordinator

Children's Healthy Living Food System Project

University of Hawai'i CTAHR

Honolulu, HI 96822



In support of Wendy F Hensel

1 message

Poranee <poranee521@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 15, 2024 at 11:16 AM

To: "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Dear Members of the UH Board of Regents,

This letter is to support Wendy F. Hensel, J.D. for the position of UH president.

As a UH alum and retired educational administration and professor at a private four-year university as well as a former member and state of Hawaii leader of the American Council on Education Women's Network, I strongly believe that Ms. Hensel will provide the most appropriate leadership needed at the UH.

Listening to her interview with *Hawaii News Now*, she demonstrated the ability to handle very well the incomplete information brought against her by *Civil Beat*. She also pointed out her vision and action to focus on promoting student success in the completion of their degree or any other goals at various UH campuses. Surely her most important quality is listening to the community as she works in the new environment. That will help UH to reach higher goals as well as work in unity with the state representatives, some of whom have been obstacles for UH for many years.

Her decades of hands-on experience as stated in her resume as "executive vice chancellor and university provost for The City University of New York. As a distinguished legal scholar and academic leader with more than twenty years of experience, she has dedicated her career to promoting inclusivity and academic excellence for all students regardless of their background," will surely bring success to UH under her leadership.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel, Ed.D



Testimony re Agenda Item IV (10/16/24 BOR Meeting)

1 message

Ben Creps <ben@publicfirstlaw.org>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Tue, Oct 15, 2024 at 10:36 AM

Aloha, please see attached testimony for tomorrow's meeting.

Thank you,
Ben Creps
Staff Attorney
Public First Law Center

2 attachments

 **UH Regents Testimony (UH President).pdf**
1300K

 **signature.asc**
1K

Gabriel Lee, Chair
University of Hawai`i Board of Regents
2444 Dole Street
Bachman Hall 209
Honolulu, Hawai`i 96822

**RE: University of Hawai`i (UH) President Selection Deliberations
October 16, 2024 Meeting; Agenda Item No. IV**

Dear Chair Lee and Regents:

My name is Ben Creps. I am a staff attorney at the Public First Law Center, a Hawai`i non-profit organization focused on solutions that promote responsiveness and transparency in government.

Public First strongly urges the Board to interview and discuss the candidates for UH President in *open session*. (We take no position on the candidates.) The October 16 agenda indicates the Board intends to conduct these activities in closed session under HRS § 92-5(a)(2), the “personnel-privacy” exemption.

The plain text of HRS § 92-5(a)(2) and clear guidance from the Hawai`i Supreme Court provide that the personnel-privacy exemption is *not* a blanket open meeting exception to discuss personnel matters. It applies *only* where “where consideration of matters affecting privacy will be involved.” *Civil Beat Law Ctr. for the Pub. Interest, Inc. v. City & County of Honolulu (CBLIC)*, 144 Hawai`i 466, 479, 445 P.3d 47, 60 (2019). This language requires the existence of a constitutionally protected privacy interest. *Id.* at 478-79, 445 P.3d at 58-60. In the absence of such an interest, “personnel matters should presumptively be discussed in an open meeting.” *Id.*

Determining whether a protected privacy interest exists, in turn, is a case-specific analysis that looks at the person at issue and topic of discussion. *Id.* at 478, 481, 445 P.3d at 59, 62. There are several non-exhaustive factors to consider. Critically, “reasonable expectations of privacy may be affected by a person’s level of discretionary and fiscal authority in government.” The Hawai`i Supreme Court expressly identified the UH President as a position with a “substantially diminished” privacy interest because it has a high degree of discretionary and fiscal authority. *Id.* at 481, 445 P.3d at 62 (citing OIP Op. No. 04-07 at 6-7).

Additionally, the decision to hold an executive session under HRS 92-5(a)(2) is not mandatory – a board can always choose to be *more* open. Boards only run afoul of the



Gabriel Lee, Chair
October 16, 2024
Page 2

Sunshine Law when they are *less* open than the law requires. *E.g., CBLC, 144 Hawai`i at 477, 445 P.3d at 58* (“Because the decision to close a meeting is discretionary, board members should thoughtfully weigh the interests at stake before voting. . . . If board members misconstrue the Sunshine Law and take action based on these misconceptions, their conduct undermines the intent of the Sunshine Law and impairs the public’s ‘right to know.’”).

The UH community and general public have a legitimate interest in understanding why a particular candidate for UH President is selected. Given the clarity of the law and keen public interest, there is no good reason to hold these important discussions behind closed doors. In light of all the effort that the Regents have invested in this process, it makes little sense to jeopardize the outcome, expose UH to potential liability, and setback the incoming UH President by starting that person’s tenure under a cloud of secrecy. *See HRS §§ 92-11, -12.*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Presidential Search -Back to the Drawing Board Please.

1 message

Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand <weygan@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Tue, Oct 15, 2024 at 7:51 PM

Dear Esteemed Members of the UH Board of Regents:

It is crucial that you please revisit the selection process and conduct a more comprehensive search to find the most qualified candidates.

Hawaii deserves better. Our UH deserves better.

At this juncture of local history, it was a profound disappointment that the search company did not find highly qualified sons and daughters of Hawaii. It is even more disconcerting that one of the two choices is clearly problematic. The decisions made by the Board of Regents have a profound impact on the UH community, and it is disheartening to see this impact not being given due consideration. A search company should not have waited for Civil Beat to reveal a significant development that has a bearing on whether one of the candidates can be effective here. What else is not known about the two selected candidates.

Mahalo.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand
alumna and returning graduate student,
former employee, rainbow warrior fan, and
public servant

--

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Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

*****All written testimony submitted are public documents. Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

Momi Bachiller

Your Organization (optional)

ASUH

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

pmb2@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

I am testifying in strong opposition to the BOR's decision to conduct the interviews of candidates for the next UH system president in executive session. This decision exemplifies a gross disregard for transparency and shared governance—cornerstones of any legitimate and respectable public institution.

The Hawai'i Supreme Court, in a 2019 ruling, made it clear that the hiring of public officials, like the UH president, must take place in open meetings unless a specific and constitutionally protected privacy concern exists. And let's be clear—the role of the UH President, which carries immense fiscal and

discretionary authority, does not meet this threshold for privacy. The Supreme Court itself identified this position as one with “substantially diminished” privacy expectations because of its profound influence on public policy and spending.

And now, once again, the BOR chooses secrecy over transparency, hiding from the very people it is meant to serve. This is the antithesis of shared governance. Your actions send a clear message: you do not care about the voices of students, faculty, or the community. You serve only yourselves and the military-industrial complex that lines your pockets.

Furthermore, the fact that none of the candidates are from Hawai‘i or have any respectable ties to Hawai‘i, reveals a deeply disturbing and racist assumption underpinning the BOR’s decision-making: that no one from Hawai‘i is competent or qualified enough to lead its own public university system. This is a colonial mindset to its core and we are tired of having outsiders imposed upon us—people who have to be caught up to speed on the extensive, and complex political and social context of Hawai‘i, yet are tasked with making decisions that will affect us for generations. Do you even know how degrading it is to have to explain my own value as a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, as an indigenous human being, to someone who holds institutional power over me and my people? Do you understand how racist it is to be forced, time and time again, to appeal to a haole when my people are the ones who lead an entire thriving civilization here for thousands of years? The same people you love to invoke when attempting to legitimize UH’s existence as a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning, while ignoring the fact that land-grant institutions like UH are colonial projects to their core. UH squats on Crown lands, stolen by the United States from the Hawaiian government! You cannot claim to honor us while simultaneously denying us the power and leadership over our own lands and futures.

The BOR has proven, time and time again, that it cannot be trusted to act in the interests of the students of the community. So, we will commit to bi-weekly meetings with the next President because it is abundantly clear that you do not represent us. We will hold this president accountable in ways that you have failed to do so.

[Your Testimony \(pdf or word\)](#)

No file attached

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

*****All written testimony submitted are public documents. Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

Sonja Giardina

Your Organization (optional)

UH Mānoa, ASUH Senator

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

sonjagia@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

My name is Sonja Giardina and I am an undergraduate student and elected senator of the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Firstly, I strongly urge that the selection process for the new UH President be conducted in an open session, ensuring transparency and community engagement. The decision to conduct these interviews in an executive session that is closed to the public is incredibly disappointing, and shows no commitment to shared governance and the meaningful inclusion of

participation from your stakeholders in massively important decisions, such as selecting the next University president.

I am also deeply concerned that there are no candidates who are Kānaka ʻŌiwi or even have strong ties to Hawaiʻi. By excluding local candidates, the Board is sending a troubling message: that those who are ancestrally descended from this ʻāina, or those who have meaningful lived experience in Hawaiʻi are not deemed capable of leading the institution that serves their own communities. This is not just frustrating—it is unacceptable.

How can the University of Hawaiʻi claim to be a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning when leaders from these islands are consistently overlooked, or outright excluded from presidential searches? The university president must be someone who understands the unique social, cultural, and political realities of Hawaiʻi without requiring a massive investment of time into education – time that should be spent actively solving these challenges together.

Furthermore, I have concerns regarding the direction each of these candidates want to take the future of education at this university. Hensel strongly emphasized artificial intelligence and online learning in her presentations and forums, which seems to suggest replacing human educators and their value, and diminishing the importance of pilina with each other and place. In addition, Vasquez Heilig's push for virtual reality classrooms similarly threatens place-based learning that is necessary for the future of a university that states its commitment to aloha ʻāina.

Additionally, I am deeply concerned by the unwillingness of both finalists to address the key issues of military occupation in Hawaiʻi. At a recent forum, Hensel avoided commenting on the military's presence, claiming it was "inappropriate to comment on things that don't directly impact the health and safety of our students." Heilig similarly avoided questions regarding the universities relationship to military involvement in the state, giving the non-answer of "it is my responsibility to provide good advice and counsel on these issues to the regents."

These stances, or lack thereof, ignore the profound impacts of military occupation on Hawaiʻi's land, resources, and community, all of which directly affect our students. Military involvement is not a peripheral issue; it deeply intersects with the safety, health, and cultural integrity of our campus and surrounding communities.

In light of these concerns, I urge the Board to reconsider the finalists and seek a leader who fully understands and embraces the unique needs of Hawaiʻi and its people. Transparency in this process is essential to ensure trust and accountability.

Sonja Giardina

[Your Testimony \(pdf or word\)](#)

No file attached



Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig's long-time contribution to Hawaii public education

1 message

Debbie Anderson <debbiea@hawaii.edu>
To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu

Wed, Oct 16, 2024 at 2:16 AM

Aloha,

Please accept this letter of recommendation for Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig as University of Hawaii President.

Your time and consideration are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Deborah V. Anderson, M.Ed., M.L.I.S., NBCT



VasquezHeiligJulianrecommended.pdf

1614K

To: [Gabriel Lee](#), Chair and the University of Hawaii Board of Regents:

My 'ohana and I have professional and personal vested interest in the success of the University of Hawaii system. After around 35 years as an educator, I function now as an h.s. Transition teacher promoting postsecondary pathways to students. As an alum also of the University of Hawaii, I am happy that my son is enrolled in a dual high school and college credit course. We appreciate a chance to explain more fully why we would prefer for the UH Board of Regents to select career educator Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig as the next UH President and Manoa Chancellor.

When I started to attend University to become a teacher, a galling newly issued 1983 report was called A “Nation At Risk.” For decades since then, the “common discourse surrounding public education in the United States has centered around negative tropes about public education,” designed to facilitate the privatization of public schools for motives related to private gain, religious preferences and segregation. This discourse re-centering has been due largely to “the effectiveness of the privatization reformers’ misinformation campaign to support privatization as the best solution for ongoing challenges and inequities in the U.S. public education system (Vasquez Heilig & Brewer, 2019).” Partnered with the negative tropes about the U.S. public school system —and the neoliberal argument to turn public education over to private management by way of a free market— is the ongoing myth of failed teachers and schools (Kumashiro, 2012). Our learners PK-20 deserve more robust and encouraging messages about the ongoing value of public education institutions than that which has been provided by Artificial Intelligence (AI), promoted by alternative candidate, lawyer Wendy Hensel.

For decades in contrast, academics have outlined the real causes of achievement gaps— opportunity and resource inequality. The expansion of social media has empowered how communities organize, talk, and engage in the public discourse about schools and school reform. Publishing in peer-reviewed journals is no longer sufficient — “this form of scholarship must be mobilized for various stakeholder audiences in traditional and social media for a greater effect on the public discourse.” Academics should not cease to publish in academic journals and books, but there is a clear need to “create ancillary work from scholarly peer-reviewed publications and books that can be disseminated in both traditional and social media.” For the research “to be more impactful in the world,” it needs to be made available more readily. New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof suggested that, “Professors today have a growing number of tools available to educate the public, from online courses to blogs to social media” (Kristof, 2014 as cited in Malin & Lubienski, 2015, p. 14).

In October 2005, I was hapai and on sabbatical in Scotland and unable to fly back to Honolulu for Kevin Kumashiro’s 3rd International Conference on Teacher Education and Social Justice. However, once the 7th conference returned to Hawaii in December 2017, I have been able to participate and bring others into succeeding Social Justice conferences. Julian Vasquez Heilig has been involved in this effort as well. We in HSTA continue to work collaboratively to elevate Social Justice issues in education, in partnership with UH, such as its College Of Education (COE). We trust Dr. Vasquez Heilig’s track record, and we’re sure it will continue.

When President Barack Obama solicited recommendations for his Secretary of Education, I nominated Linda Darling-Hammond as a thought leader. Julian Vasquez Heilig studied under Darling-Hammond as his thesis adviser. His CV details varied educational experiences such as teaching English Learners in Beijing and serving fourth graders in a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant (about 92% of taxpayers are in favor of CLCs). These types of educational experiences are recognizable to PK-20 educators in Hawaii.

Recently, the Hawaii State Department of Education (HiDOE) has been attempting to have all teachers in service improve their toolkits for serving English Learners. Julian Vasquez Heilig “has spent years studying how schools educate immigrants,” and can help Hawaii address this need much as he did in Texas.

<https://stories.kera.org/generationone/how-schools-can-help-immigrant-students/>

Dr. Vasquez-Heilig has written extensively about education policy and social justice, but more than that has become an educational thought leader.

Vasquez Heilig explains his impetus to begin efforts to shape public discussion: “In 2012, I emerged from my tenure process chrysalis. In the fall, I decided that I was going to undertake a post-tenure blog project, selecting as its title *Cloaking Inequity*.

<https://equityalliance.stanford.edu/content/blog-pile-old-books-vs-inspiring-citizens-critical-consumers-knowledge-great-debates-julian>

More than a million people have read his *Cloaking Inequity* blog. This highly successful blog is ranked currently #6 in 2024 [Top Education Blogs to Follow](#).

Vasquez-Heilig continues: “Once I began the blog, I realized that there were unlimited avenues in social media to share the blog with the public— from LinkedIn to Facebook to Twitter. I surmised that my scholarship could extend from the proverbial ‘ivory tower’ to the public space in ways that I had never imagined.”

In 2013, Vasquez-Heilig started a YouTube channel. He has contributed to [BustED pencils](#), another thought provoking education podcast. He is also a Founding Board Member of the influential Network for Public Education. Harvard’s Education Next magazine once named him as one of the top 10 education policy voices — the #2 ranked professor in the U.S. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/harvard-theres-trophy-8th-place-julian-vasquez-heilig/>

His work has been cited by the New York Times, Washington Post, Associated Press, USA Today, Education Week, Huffington Post and other print and electronic media outlets. He has also appeared on local and national radio and TV including PBS, NBC, NBCLatino, NPR, Univision, and MSNBC. Vasquez Heilig is ranked among the top public influencers shaping educational practice and policy in the U.S. by creating public conversations around education-focused issues.

In January 2013, when I attended a National Board/DOE/KS training, NBPTS Executive Director Andy Coons praised Hawaii for its PK-21 alignment. Coons explained that we are one of three states at the forefront of NBPTS’ educational breakthroughs (Linda Darling-Hammond).

That year prior to the UHPA disaffiliation from NEA, Hawaii Unit members of the National Education Association (NEA) consisted still of HSTA and UHPA. I enjoyed working alongside esteemed UHPA colleagues such as William Puette and Ruth Horie. We would be blessed to have our beloved University of Hawaii system led by a stellar educator.

In 2016, I was elected to serve as an HSTA State Delegate to the NEA Convention in Washington DC. As a social justice activist, I had become involved in the NEA and HSTA **BadAssTeachers** (BATs) Caucus. While anti-privatization activists have made some progress in occupying this ground (i.e. Badass Teachers Association), much of it has been ignored by academics.

As the NEA Convention closed, the Save Our Schools (SOS) Coalition organized once again a second national protest of education policies against the privatization of public education. On July 8, 2016 *People's March for Public Education & Social Justice* occurred on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Our message emblazoned on our red T-shirts:

"Full, equitable funding for all public schools; safe, racially just schools and communities; community leadership in public school policies; professional, diverse educators for all students; child-centered, culturally appropriate curriculum for all; and no high-stakes standardized testing!"

Dr. J, other Hawaii marchers and I agree that "It was invigorating to march and organize with so many incredible Americans from all over the United States."

There I met in person Dr. Julius Vasquez Heilig, as he was an honored speaker. He writes: "My Great Grandmother Z. Louise Scott was at the 1963 March on Washington. In fact, she also heard the I Have a Dream Speech when it was given first in Detroit by Dr. King. So, I was very emotional when I started the speech, you can probably hear my voice cracking."
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-answer-call-democracy-education-edinsights-julian-vasquez-heilig/>

After the event at the Lincoln Memorial, we marched to the ellipse next to the South Lawn of the White House. Vasquez Heilig wrote: "This is what democracy looks like."

Next we attended at *Howard University an Activists Conference*. This brought activists back together to plan how to demand social justice, with speakers such as **Journey 4 Justice**, Teachers for Social Justice (TSJ) from Chicago, the Dyett Hunger Strikers, United Opt Out, etc. As co-chair of the Senior Project in Hawaii and originator of the AASL National Task Force on Capstone Projects, I was able to promote quality alternatives to standardized testing, such as our Senior Project. We're continuing to build alternatives now in 2024-25 with the DOE's Performance Assessment Development Initiative (PADI).

When we returned to Hawaii with inspiration, our HSTA leaders helped our Speakers Bureau develop an effective Schools Our Keiki Deserve campaign. I have flown repeatedly to testify at our state Board of Education and legislature, with my testimonies on public record. Visionaries such as Julian Vasquez Heilig continue to help us strengthen PK-20 education in Hawaii.

One example of Vasquez Heilig's continuing influence: In 2016, on July 29, Cloaking Inequity broke news of the NAACP's stance against for-profit charters.

<http://www.psconnectnow.org/blog/2016/7/29/breaking-naacp-calls-for-moratorium-on-charter-schools>

Vasquez Heilig's partnership with the NAACP has grown. At the University of Kentucky College of Education, the Education and Civil Rights Initiative is a first-ever collaboration between a university and the NAACP, designed to produce the scientific evidence needed to help policy-makers reach decisions and transform lives. Through the collaboration, the education and civil rights work taking place at the UK College of Education will be amplified through the NAACP's various networks, Vasquez Heilig said.

Former Secretary of Education [Diane Ravitch has written in her blog](#) about Vasquez Heilig:



Julian Vasquez Heilig and me!

“Vasquez Heilig goes on to discuss his personal relationship with several of those on the list, including David Berliner, Pierre Bourdieu, Linda Darling Hammond, Shaun R. Harper, Frederick Hess, bell hooks, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Bettina love, Pedro Noguera, Gary Orfield, me (Diane Ravitch), and Sean Reardon.”

Vasquez Heilig has been honored with more than 30 teaching, research and service recognitions. He is committed to furthering his work in advancing these issues in education through leadership positions.

In [Palgrave Handbook of Educational Thinkers](#), Section IV. 1970 – Current, #81. Julian Vasquez Heilig. Each name on this list represents a chapter in the ongoing story of educational evolution—a story marked by challenges, innovations, and insights that have, in their own unique ways, reshaped the landscape of learning and teaching.

In 2016, the Education Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE) was formed. Vasquez Heilig sits on its Steering Committee <https://educationdeans.org/steering-committee/>.

“Education schools across the nation have deep expertise and valuable research among our faculty, helping to inform steps we, as a nation, can take to confront the problems and possibilities that surround America’s public schools,” Vasquez Heilig said. “This is something our UK College of Education students, faculty and staff do well, addressing state and local needs through research and service. I am honored to have the opportunity to share their work through this national platform.”

“As academic leaders, we must be sure the work our colleges are doing is community-engaged, relevant to what teachers, students and communities need. We cannot let our work sit in an ivory tower. It needs to be applied to problems that people in schools and communities are facing. The collective voice of Education Deans for Justice and Equity is working to ensure that colleges across the country are using our academic work to dismantle and rebuild any structures that discriminate, exclude, or hold our children back, and I appreciate the opportunity to serve on the steering committee and help guide the conversation.”

Please consider joining in Honolulu on [December 6-8, 2024](#) as the University of Hawaii hosts the [14th International Conference on Education and Justice](#) jointly with the [College of Education \(COE\)](#) and the [Fall 2024 Meeting of Education Deans for Justice and Equity \(EDJE\)](#). Theme: “Collectively Advancing Education, Democracy, and Human Rights in Times of Their Dismantling.” Building on the Conference Theme, the tentative focus of the EDJE Meeting will be, “Leading for Justice and Equity When Democracy is Under Attack.”

I remain grateful profoundly for the influence Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig has had on my life and career. Mahalo for your consideration of this wonderful educator to be the next UH President.

Deborah V. Anderson, M.Ed., M.L.I.S from UHM, NBCT
Co-Chair of the DOE Senior Project (PK-21 initiative partner)

References

Vasquez Heilig, J & Brewer, J (2019). Making the Case for Academia’s engagement in knowledge: Mobilization and purposeful public scholarship in social media. [Critical Questions in Education](#), 10(2), 81-91.

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

*****All written testimony submitted are public documents. Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

anonymous

Your Organization (optional)

Faculty at University of Hawaii

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

anonymous@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

Aloha,

After reviewing the two candidates, I recommend that the committee fail the search for the following reasons:

1. Limited Demonstration of Competence During the Interview process
 - During the interviews, neither candidate was able to effectively articulate solutions to critical challenges related to the role.
2. Incompatibility with Organizational Culture and Hawaiian Cultural Value
 - Based on the interactions and responses given during the interview process, it became evident that both candidates may not align with our organization's culture and values. They cannot even pronounce the Hawaiian words properly. Owning a vacation home does not make one local!
3. Concerns About Long-term Fit and Commitment
 - They have not demonstrated any commitment to the school mission of indigenous-centered, indigenous-serving priorities.

Mahalo!

Your Testimony (pdf or word)

No file attached

Testimony on the Candidate Finalist Wendy Hensel to the University of Hawai'i Office of the Board of Regents, UH Presidential Search Committee, UH Campus Stakeholders, and Community From the Black Student Association at UH Mānoa

1 message

Black Student Association <bsauhmanoa@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 16, 2024 at 9:02 AM

To: Black Student Association <bsauhmanoa@gmail.com>, "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Aloha e University of Hawai'i Office of the Board of Regents, UH Presidential Search Committee, and UH Campus Stakeholders,

The Black Student Association (BSA) was established in 2016 in response to the underrepresentation of Black students, faculty, and staff at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). This student-led organization's goals are to increase awareness and understanding of Black Diaspora issues, history, and culture, promote unity among Black Diaspora students, engage and connect with topics surrounding Blackness in Hawai'i, and promote and preserve Black studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

It is our kuleana to speak against and make our position known when any potential harm may impact our Black community on campus, and due to actions of Wendy Hensel's that have come to light, please be advised that this is a letter and statement of non-support of the Candidate Finalist Wendy Hensel from the Black Student Association due to the concerning actions of anti-Blackness, misogynoir, and retaliation of Tanya Monique Washington, a Black woman and law professor at GSU in 2020.

We ask that the University of Hawai'i Office of the Board of Regents, UH Presidential Search Committee, UH Campus Stakeholders, and our broader community in Hawai'i stand in solidarity with its Black students and not allow a candidate, whose actions have been proved to disservice and harm Black community, to lead in a place we love and call home and has historically protected and affirmed the liberation of Black people since the outlawing of slavery in the 1852 Hawaiian Kingdom constitution.

Our full statement is attached and will also be posted on our public instagram page. Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Black Student Association (BSA) UH Mānoa



 **A Letter on the Candidate Finalist Wendy Hensel to the University of Hawai'i Office of the Board of Regents, UH Presidential Search Committee, UH Campus Stakeholders, and Community From the Black Student Association at UH Mānoa (2) (1).pdf**
217K

For Immediate Release: October 16th, 2024

A Letter on the Candidate Finalist Wendy Hensel to the University of Hawai'i Office of the Board of Regents, UH Presidential Search Committee, UH Campus Stakeholders, and Community From the Black Student Association at UH Mānoa

The Black Student Association (BSA) was established in 2016 in response to the underrepresentation of Black students, faculty, and staff at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). This student-led organization's goals are to increase awareness and understanding of Black Diaspora issues, history, and culture, promote unity among Black Diaspora students, engage and connect with topics surrounding Blackness in Hawai'i, and promote and preserve Black studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

This is a letter and statement of non-support for the Candidate Finalist Wendy Hensel for the next president of UH Mānoa and the University of Hawai'i system. It has come to the attention of the Black Student Association leadership that Candidate Finalist Wendy Hensel was implicated in discriminatory and anti-Black retaliatory behavior toward Tanya Monique Washington, a Black woman and law professor at Hensel's previous institution of Georgia State University (GSU) in 2020.

We begin by uplifting and wholeheartedly supporting Tanya Monique Washington, Professor of Children's Constitutional Rights at Georgia State University College of Law. We want to state that we do not support the clear anti-Blackness, misogynoir, and retaliation that she experienced under the leadership of Wendy Hensel and Leslie Wolf. We stand with, believe, and support every Black woman in academia who has been forced to silence themselves for the sake of their survival at institutions of higher education (IHE).. The Black Student Association commends the bravery and resilience of Tanya Monique Washington, and other Black women like her, who continue to fight for justice for themselves, and others in spaces historically not created for us.

Despite increases in enrollment and graduation rates, Black women in academia are overrepresented in contingent faculty roles (i.e. non-tenured positions), underrepresented in administrative roles (e.g., University Presidents) and experience reduced pay comparative to their non-Black women identifying counterparts. Additionally, legacies of anti-Blackness and misogynoir within IHE, the "concrete ceiling," isolation within work environments, and a lack of institutionalized support present barriers within the career paths of Black women in higher education. Thus, it is clear that Black women within IHE experience discrimination at the nexus of their race and gender identities. Professor Tanya Monique Washington experienced while under the leadership of Wendy Hensel, are aligned with the above mentioned challenges.

During her campus visit to UH Mānoa, Wendy Hensel made a point to bring up her leadership and professional record in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), citing her work within the Black community during her time at Georgia State University. Georgia State University is a predominantly Black institution located in a state that has one of the highest populations of Black residents. As a state, which at one time had one of the highest populations of enslaved people, many Black Georgia residents are descendants of the formerly enslaved. Yet, in her discussion of her DEI work with Black student community, Hensel declined to mention this important

history. Naturally, when you are working at an institution with a predominantly Black student population, it is likely that this is the student population you will come into contact with the most. Nevertheless, given her response to Professor Tanya Monique Washington, her stated work as an administrator at a predominantly Black institution, does not confirm that her actions are rooted in the practices of DEI.

We affirm that despite the stated work Hensel has done on the behalf of Black students during her tenure at Georgia State University and CUNY, the anti-Black discrimination and retaliation against Tanya Monique Washington do not make her qualified to represent or work at the University of Hawai‘i. Especially given our institution’s stated commitment to be a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice for all students. Given her track record, we ask how will she lead our institution in the fulfillment of this critical mission?

We want to make it clear that the hiring of Wendy Hensel by the University of Hawai‘i Office of the Board of Regents would signal an endorsement of anti-Blackness and misogyny. Not only that, but it would hinder Black diaspora student success and belonging, not only at the flagship campus, but across other nine campuses within the UH system. In short, the Black Student Association cannot support the hiring of a candidate whose actions have been shown to be rooted in anti-Blackness and misogyny.

We ask that the University of Hawai‘i Office of the Board of Regents, UH Presidential Search Committee, UH Campus Stakeholders, and our broader community in Hawai‘i stand in solidarity with its Black diaspora students and not allow a candidate, whose actions have been proved to disservice and harm Black community, to lead in a place we love and call home and has historically protected and affirmed the liberation of Black people since the outlawing of slavery in the 1852 Hawaiian Kingdom constitution.

Sincerely,
Black Student Association (BSA) UH Mānoa





TIME URGENT regarding UH presidential interviews and selection by BOR

1 message

honsofio <honsofio@aol.com>

Wed, Oct 16, 2024 at 9:48 AM

To: "bor.testimony@hawaii.edu" <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Cc: "Itochiki@epicohana.org" <Itochiki@epicohana.org>, "LL@m41law.com" <LL@m41law.com>, "haning@hawaii.edu" <haning@hawaii.edu>, "dpaloma@hawaii.edu" <dpaloma@hawaii.edu>, "w.higaki@hawaii.edu" <w.higaki@hawaii.edu>, "lauren@akitakelaw.com" <lauren@akitakelaw.com>, "mmiyahira@hawaii.edu" <mmiyahira@hawaii.edu>, "n.abercrombie@hawaii.edu" <n.abercrombie@hawaii.edu>

Aloha, University of Hawai'i Board of Regents Chair Gabriel Lee and Regents,

When I wrote my initial letter to you on October 11 in support of candidate Julian Vasquez Heilig, one of the two current candidates to assume the UH Presidency, I stressed that he is a stellar contender and someone who would be a tremendous asset to the University and our larger community. That email was written prior to intensive media coverage of a controversy involving allegations of retaliation and abuse of power by the other candidate, CUNY provost Wendy Hensel. The excellent investigative reporting and followup by Stewart Yerton of Civil Beat supported by Civil Beat editor Patti Epler, and Hensel's apparent willingness to lie repeatedly in order to cover for her past misdeeds, should make it self evident that she should no longer be considered a serious candidate.

I believe that in addition to her revealed propensity to retaliate and lie to cover it up and to nepotistical place political cronies and friends in positions of power, there are reasons involving her not so covert racism and supremicism that make Hensel dangerous and totally inappropriate as a candidate for a position of power in our multi-ethnic community. It is critical for Hawaiians in particular, but also for the protection of the civil rights of our entire community, that Hensel not be selected.

My paternal grandmother was Jewish and I am proud of that part of my multi-cultural heritage so please take my remarks to follow in that context. Please also keep clearly in mind that anti-Zionism is NOT anti-Semitism and that many Orthodox Jews and progressive Jewish Americans in overwhelming numbers have called out Isarel's ongoing genocide funded by the United States through many billions of our tax dollars that are transited through Israel to companies like Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, and Raytheon and Palanteir and are being used on an ongoing basis to massacre countless numbers of innocent people in Gaza and now in Lebanon. Literally now we all can see innocent people being burned alive in the Middle East on our phone screens with our own tax dollars. The same network of political and corporate entities who are criminally responsible for this ongoing spreading genocide by Israel as a U.S. agent, are a reckless endangerment to our safety and civil rights domestically.

During her first year as provost at CUNY, Hensel got the Hillel Foundation, a dangerous Zionist organization which has perpetrated civil rights violations against Palestinians and their supporters on other campuses nation wide (see second linked article below) , involved as part of what purported to be an effort to prevent discrimination on campus. Again, I am Jewish on one side of my family and like many people in this country and as a Jew, I abhor the genocide that has resulted directly and indirectly in the ruthless massacre of approaching two hundred thousand innocent Palestinians.

By her involving Hillel using her authority as Provost at Cuny, Hensel has flagged herself as a Zionist, a dangerous and inherently racist philosophy. As we all should know by now, anti-Zionism should not be conflated with anti-semitism, a myth perpetuated by the criminal state of Israel. Out of respect for illegally colonized and displaced Hawaiians, no one of the inherently racist supremacist Zionist ilk should be allowed in a position of power in Hawai'i.

I'm including links below chronologically to both the reference to Hensel's outreach to Hillel in 2021 and to the 4 recent Civil Beat pieces addressing the retaliation allegations and her disingenuousness in responding.

<https://vanguard.blog.brooklyn.edu/2023/02/15/cuny-provost-wendy-hensel-visits-bc-answers-major-questions-in-town-hall/>

<https://palestinelegal.org/hillels-actions>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/10/uh-president-candidate-targeted-black-law-professor-for-speaking-out-review-found/>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/10/uh-president-finalist-denies-allegations-of-bias-by-black-law-professor/>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/10/profiling-candidate-for-uh-president-turned-up-serious-complaint/>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/10/law-professor-uh-president-candidate-is-lying-about-discrimination-complaint/>

Please do not subject yourselves or the community to any more needless expensive and time consuming searches or controversy. It is our good fortune that an eminently well qualified candidate who exudes genuine cultural and political sensitivity and has the temerity and experience and courage to navigate chronically treacherous waters with the Hawaii State Legislature on behalf of our University, stands ready and waiting.

Mahalo nui in advance for unanimously giving your vote of confidence to Dr. Julian Vasquez-Heilig who will tirelessly advocate for equitable access to higher education and for the civil rights of all who aspire to it.

Sincerely ,

Ellen Sofio M.D.
Mānoa

P.S. Please see my original email below from October 11 in below in case you have not already received and seen it.

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: honsofio <honsofio@aol.com>

To: bor.testimony@hawaii.edu <bor.testimony@hawaii.edu>

Sent: Friday, October 11, 2024, 10:47:28 AM HST

Subject: Presidential choice to succeed David Lassner

Dear University of Hawai'i Board of Regents Chair Gabriel Lee and members,

I am writing as a physician alumna of the John A Burns School of Medicine who also did part of my undergraduate degree in biology at the University of Hawaii many years ago prior to graduating from Stanford.

I believe the well being of our University and community colleges is essential to the well being of our state and that it is essential to facilitate access to higher education for everyone who is motivated to obtain it regardless of age, gender identity or ethnicity. I believe also that because of the great harms that have been inflicted on our host culture over the past 2 centuries, the University of Hawaii should work to be a force to stem and reverse the cultural genocide that has tragically transpired.

I also believe the University should be a bastion for free speech and an exemplary institution in its respect for and guardianship of the civil rights of students, faculty and community members.

I recently heard both candidates vying to assume President David Lassner's position upon his impending retirement, speak at public forums. Based on my assessment from these more than hour long public interviews of both candidates, I arrived at the conclusion that Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig should be selected. His impeccable and impressive academic credentials from both Stanford and University of Michigan, his experience as a provost, his incredible cultural sensitivity, his advocacy for civil rights, his experience working with political entities, his eloquence, personal warmth, sense of humor, enthusiasm and energy would all constitute a fantastic asset to our statewide University system.

I was not at all similarly impressed by the other candidate, Wendy Hensel, who seems to have a much narrower focus of interest and almost no cultural sensitivity to Hawai'i at this time. She also seems to have a focus of interest perhaps too exclusively on artificial intelligence. According to Stuart Yerton's recent article in Civil Beat she also has a history of dangerous retaliatory behavior when challenged. None of these traits would be good for our University or our community in even a faculty member much less at the highest level of leadership.

It is my belief that the choice should be hands down and unanimous for Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig. I hope you will give your overwhelming support to welcome him to provide exactly the kind of leadership the University of Hawai'i system and our larger community needs and deserves during very challenging times.

Mahalo for your kind attention, please acknowledge receipt

Ellen Sofio M.D.

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

*****All written testimony submitted are public documents. Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

Healani Sonoda-Pale

Your Organization (optional)

UH Mānoa

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

melindas@hawaii.edu

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

IV.A. Executive Session: Personnel and Legal Matters: (1) Presidential Finalist Interviews, (2) Board Deliberation Regarding Selection and Compensation of the President

Your Position (required) *

Oppose

Your Testimony/Comments

Dear Chair Lee and Regents,

My name is Healani Sonoda-Pale, and I am testifying as a Kanaka Maoli Staff Senate individual member at the University of Hawaii. I urge the Board of Regents to interview and discuss the candidates for UH President in an open session. UH is a publicly supported institution that exists on ceded lands—Hawaiian lands taken without the consent of our people. As such, the community has a right to witness decisions that will shape this institution's future.

The October 16 agenda indicates that the Board intends to conduct candidate interviews in a closed session under HRS § 92-5(a)(2), the "personnel-privacy" exemption. However, the plain text of HRS § 92-5(a)(2) and guidance from the Hawai'i Supreme Court demonstrate that this exemption is not a blanket permission to close meetings on personnel matters. The court has ruled that the exemption applies only when constitutionally protected privacy interests are involved (see *Civil Beat Law Ctr. for the Pub. Interest, Inc. v. City & County of Honolulu*, 144 Hawai'i 466, 479, 445 P.3d 47, 60 (2019)). In the absence of such privacy concerns, personnel matters should presumptively be discussed in an open meeting.

The court specifically noted that positions like UH President, which carry high levels of discretionary and fiscal authority, hold a "substantially diminished" privacy interest. Therefore, discussions regarding the next UH President should take place in an open forum to ensure the transparency owed to both the Kanaka Maoli community and the general public. The Sunshine Law allows for openness beyond what is minimally required and reminds us that public bodies must weigh the interests of transparency before voting to close meetings (see *CBLC*, 144 Hawai'i at 477, 445 P.3d at 58).

Furthermore, I urge the Board to make a final decision on a candidate, rather than declaring a failed search. Such a declaration would open the door to interim appointments, which could be perceived as an abuse of power and an attempt to circumvent public input. This institution does not belong to the Board of Regents; it belongs to the people of Hawai'i, especially the Kanaka Maoli, who deserve a say in the university's future direction. UH's mission is not to advance military lethality but to educate and prepare Hawai'i's future leaders for a brighter, more inclusive future.

When decisions of this magnitude are made behind closed doors, the entire community should be concerned about the university's direction. Please honor the spirit of transparency and openness by holding these discussions in public. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

[Your Testimony \(pdf or word\)](#)

No file attached

Public Testimony Form - University of Hawaii Board of Regents

Please provide your testimony on this form for the next University of Hawaii Board of Regents meeting. Make sure you include all the requested information so that the Board of Regents is able to clearly understand the testimony provided.

*****All written testimony submitted are public documents.
Therefore, any testimony submitted is public information and will be posted on the board's website.***

Your Name (required) *

Students and Faculty for Justice in Palestine

Your Organization (optional)

Your e-mail address (in case we need to reach you) *

sfjpuh@gmail.com

Board of Regents Agenda Item (required) *

V.A. Personnel Action on the Selection and Compensation of the President of the University of Hawaii

Your Position (required) *

Comments Only

Your Testimony/Comments

October 16, 2024

Dear Chair Lee and and Members of the Board of Regents,

We write to support the candidacy of Dr. Juan Vasquez Heilig for the position of President of the University of Hawai'i system. We appreciated his stated commitment to fostering UH's mission as a Native Hawaiian Place of learning and his sincere investment in community-focused education. We believe that between the two finalists, Dr. Vasquez Heilig has the vision and experience more suited to lead UH.

In his open forum, Dr. Vasquez Heilig proposed creative ways to foster community and research and to engage different stakeholder groups within Hawai'i's unique context. We appreciated his collaborative vision, his commitment to academic freedom, his understanding of students as researchers, and his respect for the labor of workers across the university system, including staff and graduate students. We found his comments to be sincere, and that he approached the position with humility and an openness to learn about our system and our state's needs and values.

We also would like to express strong opposition to the candidacy of Wendy Hensel. We found her comments about Hawai'i and about diversity to be anathema to UH's values as a Native Hawaiian place of learning. We found her comments about owning property on Hawai'i island and learning about Native Hawaiian history via PBS documentaries to be tone deaf at best, and profoundly racist at worst.

We also have concerns about Hensel's investment in online education and AI. Though we recognize the value of online education for some learners, Hensel's approach leaves open the possibility of diminishing the strength and autonomy of our faculty and undermining the quality of education we can offer our students.

Overall, we have concerns about the lack of transparency in the presidential search process, and questions about why no candidates with experience and expertise in Native Hawaiian learning were chosen as finalists. While we would have preferred a candidate with stronger ties to Hawai'i, between the two finalists, we prefer Dr. Vasquez Heilig.

Sincerely,
Students and Faculty for Justice in Palestine at UH

[Your Testimony \(pdf or word\)](#)

No file attached