



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®

Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i

David Lassner
President

DEPT. COMM. NO. 304

January 3, 2024

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, The Honorable Scott Saiki, Speaker
President and Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Representatives
Thirty-Second State Legislature Thirty-Second State Legislature
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813 Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, the University of Hawai'i is transmitting one copy of the Annual Report on Operations of the Hawai'i Research Center for Futures Studies (Section 304A-3253, Hawai'i Revised Statutes) as requested by the Legislature.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, this report may be viewed electronically at: <https://www.hawaii.edu/offices/government-relations/2024-legislative-reports/>.

Should you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact Stephanie Kim at (808) 956-4250, or via e-mail at scskim@hawaii.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Lassner'.

David Lassner
President

Enclosure

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UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT



REPORT TO THE 2024 LEGISLATURE

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

HRS 304A-3253

December 2023

HAWAI‘I RESEARCH CENTER FOR FUTURES STUDIES

Activities for the year 2022-2023

INTRODUCTION

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

A detailed account of the work by the director, associates, and students working together under the auspices of the Hawai‘i Center for Futures Studies can be found on our website <http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/>.

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

SELECTED ACTIVITIES SINCE OCTOBER 2021

- Over the course of 2023, the Futures Center has devoted significant time and resources to the development and launching of an Intelligence Studies Pathway and Early College Support program called the Academy for Hawai‘i Intelligence. The summer program served high school students from the islands of Hawai‘i, Maui, Kauai, and Oahu. The program seeks to prepare Hawai‘i residents seeking employment in the growing intelligence and national security sector.
- Graduate researcher Ari Eisenstat has continues support our research project with U.S. Space Force and the Futures Center Outer Space Research Initiative.
- The Center continues to provide supervision and guidance to over thirty graduate students in the pursuit of their MA and PhD degrees. Many of the students work for state offices, lead civil society organizations, or serve in the armed forces. The Futures Center works very hard to accommodate non-traditional students in need of further education who cannot leave their vital positions in state and national government service.

FUTURES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE OF HAWAI‘I

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

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

Environment: During the last year we have seen significant storms and climate related catastrophes such as the wild fires in Maui as well as continued uncontrolled burns through out the state. Beyond Hawai‘i we have seen other climate related catastrophe affecting our Pacific community. Guam was hit hard over the past year. Our international research suggests that the state of Hawai‘i ought to develop contingency plans for rapid and unexpected climate and non-climate related changes to the environment as a region-wide phenomena beyond existing capabilities for cooperation and federal disaster management.

Economy and Workforce Development: Investing in onsite manufacturing, sustainable agriculture and food production, as well as the capacity for repair and building essential hi-tech infrastructure and emergency energy alternatives as well as financial supports for the downstream effects of price shocks should be a high priority for the state.

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

Security: The Futures Center’s continued work with Indo-Pacific Command as well as international security partners around the world further confirms that the defense sector of the U.S. sees itself in a competitive and antagonistic relationship with China, North Korea, and Russia. The center encourages a more robust dialogue at the state level for how this will impact Hawai‘i residents. Particularly as the state is asked to shoulder a larger responsibility in missile defense efforts and international surveillance capabilities.

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

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

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