



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

SCR 138 SD1 – REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO CONDUCT A MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SCR 138 SD1. The resolution requests the Office of the Auditor to perform a management and performance audit of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy (OVPAS) of the University of Hawai'i (UH), to focus their efforts on Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education (Hawai'i P-20), system-wide career pathways, articulation agreements and performance metrics.

We recognize that transparency and accountability are essential to maintaining public trust and achieving continuous improvement. Therefore, we do not oppose this audit and believe it could be an opportunity to provide clarity and insight into our ongoing efforts.

OVPAS includes several offices and positions relevant to a potential audit. The Institutional Research, Analysis and Planning Office (IRAPO) provides comprehensive system-wide data on student success metrics, including transfer rates and completion outcomes. The office oversees federal compliance reporting and plays an important role in aligning UH data with evolving federal regulatory requirements, such as providing the data for campus compliance with the recent Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment (FVT/GE) mandates. As the national focus turns toward post-graduate outcomes assessment, OVPAS has invested its resources and capacity in additional tools and external sources necessary to capture detailed employment and career progression metrics. Furthermore, the growing institutional emphasis on data-informed decision-making necessitates the development of sophisticated data visualization capabilities and interactive dashboards to make complex information accessible to a wide range of stakeholders from UH to the general public.

OVPAS also houses the Academic Programs and Policy Office, a small unit that includes the newly created Director of Workforce Development position, a critical position designed to support the UH strategic plan's workforce imperative, forge connections between UH and the business community, develop and host disciplinary

convenings, as well as identify critical pathways between two and four-year campuses. Additionally, the Academic Programs and Policy Office convenes and supports the chief academic officers from the ten UH campuses and manages the processes for new program approval and academic program review. This office convenes a number of working groups, including those supporting international programs, as well as the Academic Advising and Transfer Network (AATN), a group of advisors and transfer specialists dedicated to improving transfer pathways. OVPAS also has created working groups focused on improving transfer and articulation processes.

The OVPAS houses the Student Affairs Office, another small unit which convenes the senior student affairs officers from the ten UH campuses and provides coordination and expertise across the UH System in areas such as admissions, scholarships, financial aid, registration, student basic needs, and student government.

Although the other areas of OVPAS are funded through general funds, please note that Hawai'i P-20 is primarily grant funded, including through its major federal grant programs, which already undergo an annual federal compliance audit to ensure they are adhering to federal laws, regulations and grant terms and conditions. In addition, most of the grants require annual performance reports to demonstrate the progress made towards meeting grant objectives and performance measures.

A performance audit, as proposed in SCR 138 SD1, could complement existing compliance and performance efforts by offering a broader assessment of initiatives and assessing the adequacy of resources. By identifying strengths and areas for growth, this process could allow OVPAS to refine the strategies and enhance the impact of the work for our students and the broader community.

We would work with the Auditor to ensure a thorough review of our unit's operations. We are confident that the Auditor's report would help demonstrate our commitment to accountability and continuous improvement while reinforcing the importance of our mission in shaping Hawai'i's educational landscape.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this resolution.



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Board of Regents

**House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 2:00 p.m.**

Testimony by:

Gabe Lee, Chair, Board of Regents

Laurie Tochiki, Vice Chair, Board of Regents

**S.C.R. No. 138, S.D. 1 – REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO CONDUCT A
MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC
STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee:

The Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i (Board) would like to offer the following comments on S.C.R. No. 138, S.D. 1, which requests the Auditor to conduct a management and performance audit of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy of the University of Hawai'i. While the Board appreciates the intent of this concurrent resolution and recognizes transparency and accountability are essential to maintaining public trust and achieving continuous improvement, the existence of a statutorily created and functioning Independent Audit Committee (H.R.S. §304A-321), exempt from chapter 91 and part I of chapter 92 to the extent that the independent audit committee is engaging in discussions with internal or external auditors on matters that should remain confidential in accordance with nationally recognized best practices for independent audit committees, or in proceedings arising from an investigation by the independent audit committee relating to potentially actionable civil or criminal conduct, regardless of whether the investigation is pending or outstanding should be noted.

Management and performance of academic oversight functions also occurs through rigorous accreditation processes for each campus. Additionally, the Board has an Office of Internal Audit that is structurally an office separate and apart from the administration of the University of Hawai'i. At the discretion of the Chair of Committee on Independent Audit, discussions associated with this matter can be undertaken.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on S.C.R. No. 138, S.D. 1.

2444 Dole Street, Bachman Hall 209
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-8213
Fax: (808) 956-5156

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