



# UNIVERSITY of HAWAII®

Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i

David Lassner  
President

December 30, 2024

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,  
President and Members of the Senate  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura, Speaker  
and Members of the House of Representatives  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, 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/govrel/docs/reports/2025/hrs304a-3253\\_2025\\_ctr-futures-studies\\_annual-report\\_508.pdf](https://www.hawaii.edu/govrel/docs/reports/2025/hrs304a-3253_2025_ctr-futures-studies_annual-report_508.pdf).

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](mailto: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 2025 LEGISLATURE

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

HRS 304A-3253

December 2024

# **HAWAI‘I RESEARCH CENTER FOR FUTURES STUDIES**

## **Activities for the year 2023-2024**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the last legislative report, the Center has continued its tradition of collaborative faculty and student research, consultations, and workshops in Hawai‘i and internationally. The following is a series of recommendations to the State of Hawai‘i and a brief description of a selection of the Center's activities.

Our website, <http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/>, provides a detailed account of the work of the director, associates, and students working together under the auspices of the Hawai‘i Center for Futures Studies.

Our graduate, affiliate, and faculty researchers have expertise in various areas, from new media and information technologies, artificial and machine intelligence, Hawaiian resurgence, and geoengineering to national security, space exploration, participatory governance design, and sustainable agriculture and development. We can provide issue-specific consultation and create and run future 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 or any of the Center affiliates or students. We would welcome future support and projects from and for the state.

### **SELECTED ACTIVITIES**

- Throughout 2023, the Futures Center has devoted significant time and resources to the continued development of an Intelligence Studies Pathway and Early College Support program called the Academy for Hawai‘i Intelligence. The summer program serves high school students from Hawai‘i, Maui, Kaua‘i, and O‘ahu islands. The program seeks to prepare Hawai‘i residents for employment in the growing intelligence and national security sector. Forty students from across the state attended this past summer. We are planning for the same number for the summer of 2025.
- The center has hosted workshops and colloquia on artificial intelligence and research methodology. The center is leading the effort to bring in industry—and defense-related AI subject matter experts to ensure that our students and faculty are at the forefront of new technological capabilities.
- Graduate researcher Ari Eisenstat continues to support our research project with the U.S. Space Force and the Futures Center Outer Space Research Initiative.
- The Futures Center continues to supervise and guide over twenty graduate students pursuing MA and PhD degrees. Many 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 who need further education but 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 participated in several planning and foresight events on futures, climate change, and national security in Hawai‘i and worldwide. These discussions have been held at the city, state, national, and international levels. The following statewide recommendations are gleaned from those meetings, considering what makes Hawai‘i a distinctive living and policy environment.

These recommendations align with three major sectors for which the Futures Center has cultivated its strengths in research and collaboration: environment, economy, and security. We have added education to core areas this year as the center has taken the lead on the consequences of AI and technological surprise in education. We are always available to the Governor’s office and Legislature to discuss and research these recommendations or other areas of concern.

**Environment:** During the last year, we have seen continued consequences of fires and storms in Hawai‘i. While climate change and sea level rise are slow-motion crises, the consequences for our outlying islands and communities are already being felt. Particularly, communities dependent upon cesspools for waste management lack management strategies for the coming years. Similarly, water quality throughout the islands is a significant concern, and there are inadequate provisions for adaptation.

**Economy and Workforce Development:** The state should prioritize investing in on-site manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, food production, the capacity to repair and build essential high-tech infrastructure, emergency energy alternatives, and financial support for the downstream effects of price shocks. These recommendations are made every year. However, the threat of a looming trade war with many Asia-Pacific nations and the increasing fragility of supply chains suggest that this is now a near-term rather than distant crisis.

Additionally, due to the increased capability of artificial intelligence platforms, we will likely see the disruption of many telework job opportunities. State projections and strategies for economic diversification must seriously consider the disruptive consequences of large language models.

**Security:** The Futures Center’s continued work with Indo-Pacific Command and international security partners worldwide confirms that the U.S. defense sector is in a competitive and antagonistic relationship with China, North Korea, and Russia. The center encourages a more robust dialogue at the state level about how this will impact Hawai‘i residents. Notably, the state is asked to shoulder more responsibility in missile defense efforts and international surveillance capabilities. It is critical to reach out to allies and partners to build more robust resilience.

We recommend integrating geopolitical scenarios and changes with state and local planning for climate change and economic disorder disruptions. 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 future images.

As always, the Center is happy to facilitate those educational opportunities and new thinking that the Governor or legislature finds appropriate.

**Education:** This year, we are adding the category of education. AI has shown to be highly disruptive to the classroom at every level of state education. We recommend a more robust task force considering how AI ubiquitous access will affect skill loss across the state. In particular, the impact of AI on reading and writing skills and basic research skills is alarming. AI holds great promise for improving efficiency and safety. However, the consequences of redundant human skills are troubling.

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