



UNIVERSITY
OF HAWAII
HILO

LATE

31 March 2008

To: **House Committee on Finance**

Hon. Karen Awana
Hon. Della Au Belatti
Hon. Tom Brower
Hon. Mele Carroll
Hon. Faye Hanohano
Hon. Kimberly Pine

Hon. Sharon Har
Hon. Jon Karamatsu
Hon. Michael Magaoay
Hon. Joey Manahan
Hon. John Mizuno
Hon. Gene Ward

Hon. Bob Nakasone
Hon. Karl Rhoads
Hon. Roland Sagum, III
Hon. James Tokioka
Hon. Colleene Meyer

I am writing to you in support of SB2891, SD1, HD1 (HSCR 1332-08) being heard by the Finance Committee which extends current state funding for the Pacific International Space Center for Exploration Systems (PISCES). PISCES shows promise of playing a major role in the expansion of UH Hilo's ability to provide high quality education to the citizens of our state. In all fairness, I must alert you to the fact that I am Deputy Director of PISCES and admittedly have a vested interest in its continued success. However, I am writing to you as Chairman of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at UH Hilo. In addition, as a former elected member of the Hawai'i State Board of Education, I am well acquainted with the importance of providing our youngsters with the opportunity to develop their strengths so that they can find their future here in Hawai'i, rather than being forced to seek employment elsewhere. PISCES helps us to do that.

PISCES combines exciting, culturally sensitive research and development with an elaborate K-12 and Higher Education outreach program. Its underlying premise is to support the development of sustainable human habitats that will enable us to live for long periods on Mars and the moon. This involves engineering and science projects associated with Robotics, the production of useful materials from the soil, the sociology of persons living together in small, confined groups, the protection of human biological systems from ultra-violet light and other space dangers, etc. We believe that Hawai'i is the world's most perfect site for this work.

Department of Physics & Astronomy

200 W. KAWILI STREET
HILO, HAWAII 96720-4091
PHONE: (808) 974-7383
FAX: (808) 974-7693

<http://www.uhh.hawaii.edu>

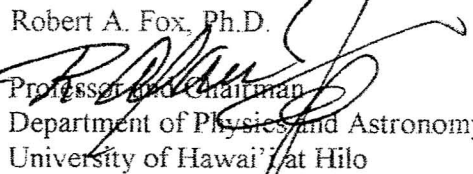
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UH Hilo is the ideal site for such a program. It has a long history of concentrating on undergraduate, culturally-sensitive education for our young people. In keeping with this, PISCES is already supporting two courses for students interested in space. The first one is completely subscribed and we expect similar student interest in the other. PISCES is committed to emphasizing the University of Hawai'i as a *system* and is working with faculty members at several of UH Manoa's colleges to be sure that students throughout the state can benefit from its educational programs without having to move from one island to the other. A coordinated K-12 program of space-related instructional modules is already being developed and will be made available to the children of our state without additional costs to the already-strapped schools.

PISCES' sensitivity to its hosts is evident in the establishment of a local advisory group to make sure that our scientific activities have support *before*, not after, they are begun. A distinguished panel of Big Islanders will assist us and make sure that PISCES respects our history and culture.

During the last year's legislative session, PISCES was fortunate to receive bipartisan support for a state appropriation to begin its work. In the few months since that appropriation was implemented, PISCES has already received two NASA grants totaling \$640,000, written proposals for several more similar grants, and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Colorado School of Mines both to increase its ability to conduct its work and to improve opportunities for our students. Word is beginning to get out and we are starting to receive unsolicited inquiries from outside agencies asking whether PISCES would be available to collaborate and offering additional support funds. This represents the beginning of the 'leverage' which we believe made PISCES so attractive to last year's legislature.

Clearly, the state's limited resources will not permit indefinite state support for PISCES, no matter how successful it may be. But this second year is a critical time in the development of PISCES and continued support for another year or so is clearly indicated. Put directly, PISCES has done what it said it was going to do and deserves your support. It has attracted many hundreds of thousands of outside dollars, begun programs both in research/development and in community outreach/education, strengthened UH Hilo's ability to serve the students of our state, and brought nationally-respected scientists and educators to Hawai'i. We urge your continued support.

Robert A. Fox, Ph.D.

Professor and Chairman
Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Deputy Director
Pacific International Space Center for Exploration Systems