



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Tuesday, February 2, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Risa E. Dickson
Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Hawai'i System

HB 1801 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole and members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment:

I am submitting written testimony on behalf of the University of Hawai'i regarding House Bill 1801 – Relating to the University of Hawaii – which proposes to reduce executive and managerial salaries at the University for fiscal year 2016-17 to the extent necessary to provide \$4 million in the same fiscal year to be used for graduate student assistant compensation.

The University of Hawai'i opposes the passage of such legislation that would statutorily mandate a reduction in University executive and managerial salaries.

We believe that the proposed legislation does not support the spirit and intent of Article X, Section 6. of the Hawaii State Constitution which provides in part that the BOR *"..shall have the exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university."* Furthermore, *"The board shall have the power to formulate policy, and exercise control over the university through its executive officer, the president of the University, who shall be appointed by the Board"*. We believe that such proposed legislation removes and denies the board's constitutional governance and authority over the University.

The work of graduate student assistants is valuable to the University of Hawai'i (UH), and graduate student assistantships are awarded as part of an education and training specific to the degree program in which a student is enrolled. Graduate student assistants receive stipends for their work, not salaries. As a matter of course in academic institutions, graduate assistants are not compensated with salary. Their compensation can include any combination of components such as tuition waivers, stipends, scholarships, etc. – but, salary is not a form of compensation for graduate assistants. A graduate student assistantship is neither a career path, nor a vocation, but part of the educational training in an academic discipline that allows a student to further their education and training, make meaningful contributions to the discipline and the University, and be provided financial assistance toward their degree.

The proposed legislation asserts that the salaries of UH executives and managers are “high salaries” but without an objective review and determination based on an independent study and/or audit. It also appears to suggest that a comparison between compensation for graduate assistants who are in temporary positions as part of their education and training, and UH executives and managers, who are in career positions, is a matter of statewide concern.

Additionally, HB1801 is proposing a one-time \$4 million lump sum source of funding for graduate assistant stipends, without any certainty or guarantee that such funding will be maintained and/or achieved in future years without further financial resources or possibly negative impacts to the services currently provided by the University. Finding funds for graduate assistant salaries can be achieved and/or accomplished by other means rather than legislatively mandating the BOR to act in a prescriptive manner.

The University requests that this bill be held.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Date: February 2nd, 2016
Time: 9:30AM
Place: Conference Room 309

Re: Support for HB 1801 Relating to the University of Hawai'i

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jonathan Dial, and I am writing on behalf and as the President of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Graduate Student Organization (GSO), which represents the approximately 5,000 graduate students at the UH Mānoa campus. I am writing in strong support of HB 1801, which seeks to supplement compensation for graduate assistants at UH.

Graduate assistants are an integral part of UH's operations. They perform many necessary functions, such as teaching, research, and administrative assistance, without which the university would not be able to operate. Unfortunately, these employees are not compensated fairly for their labor. Currently, base pay for graduate assistants at UHM is \$17,500/year, while UH's website sets the cost of living in Honolulu for graduate students at nearly \$34,000/year in 2012. Additionally, the pay rates for graduate assistants have not been increased since 2003/2004. Regardless of the elimination of the bottom pay steps in 2013, UH ranks third from the bottom when compared to all peer and benchmark institutions by current rates of compensation for graduate assistants in relation to cost of living. This is highly problematic for graduate students, as these positions are intended to serve as means through which students can earn a living wage while pursuing their education. Since current compensation does not meet those expectations, many graduate assistants must seek out supplementary employment opportunities, which ultimately increases time-to-completion towards degrees, decreases the overall quality of their teaching, research, and administrative work, and ultimately costs the university more.

Attempts by graduate assistants and the GSO to remedy this problem have been met with unwavering opposition from university administration. These circumstances no doubt deter potential students and are also likely involved with many students' decisions to leave UH and the state. Indeed, graduate student enrollment has significantly declined in recent years. Consequently, we have no option but to turn to the legislature in the hopes that governance will succeed where management is failing.

Finally, post graduates fill vital roles within local industries, businesses, and civil service. Their high levels of knowledge, expertise, and training contribute significantly to the competitiveness of the production and distribution of goods and services, as well as pushing the frontiers of scientific and technological innovation. It would be prudent to ensure that graduate education in Hawaii is perceived as desirable, attainable, and affordable. Based on these reasons, we strongly support HB 1801.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Dial
UH Mānoa Graduate Student Organization, President

Email: jdial@hawaii.edu

Graduate Student Organization • University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Hemenway Hall 212 • 2445 Campus Road • Honolulu, HI 96822

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Time: 9:30 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support of HB 1801 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Jade Delevaux, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1801, which seeks appropriations to supplement compensation for graduate assistants at UH.

Graduate assistants at UH are theoretically paid to work for 20 hours per week and spend the other half time on their degree (such as class work or research) but yet in certain circumstances, which have not yet been tested in court, some students are expected to work for 40 hours, as expressed by my former advisor: "Just to be clear about the "part-time" - UH has the oddest system which brings about a lot of confusion. [...] but even if the GA IPRC gives you is officially 0.5FTE, my (and your [funders]) expectation is this is your only job/project and you're working on it full-time." And given the power disparity in these working relationships, I had to provide 40 hours worth of work on the funded project and figure out another 20 hours out of my time to work on my PhD, otherwise I was losing my Research assistantship and in the process my PhD research. These types of expectations make it very hard for us as students to feel safe in our working and learning environment. It often feels like learning is not really the primary goals for certain professors.

This student right bill is an opportunity for graduate students who also work as research or teaching assistants to have some level of protection from intellectual abuse and overworking students (my average week was over 70 hours a week) for a 20 hour's worth of salary (including tuition waivers). Doing so would not only serve justice, it would also work towards improving the quality of graduate education for the university and the state. I therefore support HB 1801 and urge you to do so as well.

Respectfully submitted,

Jade Delevaux
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HB1801

Submitted on: 2/1/2016
Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bret Polopolus-Meredith	Individual	Support	No

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