

Pharmacy school enrollment down

By STEPHANIE SALMONS Hawaii Tribune-Herald | Monday, September 30, 2019, 12:05 a.m.



Tribune-Herald file photo Construction on the University of Hawaii at Hilo's new Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy building is shown in this May 29 photo.

A smaller than normal incoming class this semester means that enrollment is down at the University of Hawaii at Hilo's Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy.

At last report, the new class of incoming pharmacy students totaled 48, UH-Hilo Chancellor Bonnie Irwin said last week, "and we were around 80 in the past."

"So we still have classes of 80 that (are in the pipeline) as well, but the new class is considerably smaller," she aid.

In July, Irwin told the Tribune-Herald that enrollment at the College of Pharmacy, which has fluctuated over the past several semesters, was expected to decline this fall.

Irwin began in her role on July 1, but former interim Chancellor Marcia Sakai sent an email to the UH-Hilo ohana in early May expressing concerns about the pharmacy college, a copy of which was provided to the Tribune-Herald by a community member.

“When the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy opened in 2007, there was a severe shortage of pharmacists in Hawaii and a shortage of capacity in pharmacy schools nationwide,” Sakai wrote in the letter. “(The pharmacy college) was launched to address these gaps with an innovative financial plan that was based on a strong base of non-resident students who would complement local enrollment and pay a higher tuition rate.”

However, Sakai wrote that the changing health care environment in Hawaii, the Pacific and the nation has negatively affected enrollment, and as such, the College of Pharmacy will take “strong proactive measure to reduce costs commensurate with an anticipated smaller incoming class for fall 2019, and perhaps the next several years,” and will begin the process of redesigning the program to help reverse the current enrollment decline.

Irwin said the university is in progress of creating a new vision for the College of Pharmacy, and a future study will look at areas of improvement to help the university find its niche amid other pharmacy programs.

“We certainly, I think, can concentrate on certain areas of excellence,” she said. “And one area that I think is a strength for us that we could probably build on is rural health care and the role of pharmacies in rural areas and in indigenous areas. So, the idea would be to also recruit students from the mainland who might be from these rural areas and kind of teach them what we know, working on this island and in this space, and they can then go back to their communities as well.”

She doesn’t know yet what the “steady state” of the program will be.

“We’re not going to get back to the 80s because there are just so many pharmacy programs now in the country,” Irwin said. “To land at a steady state that’s around 50 (students) or so, I think would still create a viable program.”

Irwin said the new and nearly-completed \$33.6 million pharmacy building will also help attract students to the program.

“It’s always nice to be able to show off really nice, state-of-the-art facilities, and I think if we market that space appropriately, that should also help with the enrollment in pharmacy, particularly attracting students from the mainland ... ,” she said.

“I think it’s something we can market to the mainland as a good option for them — come to Hawaii. You want to become a pharmacist, but come and do it here. We can teach you things about the rural environment, we can teach you about some of the indigenous issues, give you a skill set that you wouldn’t necessarily get at a traditional pharmacy school in the mainland, and then you know, send you back to your community where you can serve.”

Smaller class sizes also impact the College of Pharmacy’s budget.

Irwin said the College of Pharmacy is funded separately from the rest of the campus. It is “pretty much self-funded.”

“So we’ve had to do some trimming and really take a look at efficiencies,” she said. “How can we be more efficient in delivering the education we need to deliver. But it is also important to keep in mind that we still have those large classes in the pipeline.”

Irwin said a couple of faculty members have left, which saved some money.

“We’re doing OK,” she said. “But it is a lot of belt-tightening going on.”

The College of Pharmacy’s new building has yet to be occupied. Irwin said faculty and staff will begin moving in next month and a grand opening is set for 10 a.m. Dec. 4.

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye's vision comes to life: UH Hilo's new College of Pharmacy building dedicated

December 5, 2019 By Staff

The \$31-million, 45,000-square-foot, two-story building is a contemporary design with classrooms for applied learning, high-fidelity simulations, and distance audio-visual communications. There are also multiple lab spaces, a simulated pharmacy facility, offices, a student community center, and myriad gathering and study areas.

By Susan Enright. Photos by Raiatea Arcuri.



The University of Hawai'i at Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy hosted a community celebration on Wednesday to dedicate and bless the college's new permanent building recently completed at the UH Hilo University Park of Science and Technology.

Hawaiian protocols and blessing ceremony were led by Kumu **Moses Crabbe** and the UH Hilo Kīpaepae Committee.

A rainy Hilo day, attendees of the ceremonies first gathered in a large tent for opening remarks.

“As the only college of pharmacy in the Pacific Rim, we are the academic cornerstone for the most advanced level of pharmacy practice and pharmaceutical science research,” says the dean of college, **Carolyn Ma**. “Our students, taught by our exceptional faculty and supported by dedicated staff, can continue living our mission to improve the health throughout the state of Hawai'i and the Pacific Rim.”

Other speakers and distinguished attendees at the dedication event: UH President **David Lassner**; Chancellor **Bonnie D. Irwin**; UH Regent **Wayne Higaki**; **Ken Inouye** and **Irene Hirano-Inouye** representing the late Senator Daniel K. Inouye; **Jessica Toyama**, president of the inaugural class of 2011; several elected officials; and others. UH Hilo Chancellor Emerita **Rose Tseng** and former Interim Chancellor **Marcia Sakai** also attended.

“This college is built on the premise that our ultimate responsibility is to help lift up the people of our island, our state, and region, and we do this through answering the needs of our local communities,” says Chancellor Irwin. “And one of the most pressing needs in our state and region is the continuous improvement of health services.”

“It was a very emotional day for me to see this building here after all of the work that everyone has put into it,” says pharmacy student **Lillian Tran**. “Not only is this building concrete, I don’t know if they realize they’ve made so many people’s dreams also become concrete.”

Following opening remarks, attendees gathered at the main entrance of the new building for blessing and then tours of the facilities.

The \$31-million, 45,000-square-foot, two-story building features a unique and contemporary design by WCIT Architecture with classrooms that accommodate applied learning, high-fidelity simulations, and distance audio-visual communications. There are also multiple lab spaces, a simulated pharmacy facility, faculty and staff offices, a student community center and study areas. The building is targeted to meet the requirements for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification.

Established in 2006, the college admitted its inaugural class in 2007, and has graduated 744 doctor of pharmacy students and five doctor of philosophy students.

The current student body of 300 represents one of the most diverse academic populations in the country: 60 percent from Hawai‘i, with 40 percent from 24 continental states, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Kenya, South Korea and Taiwan.

Classes will be held in the new building beginning in January 2020.

“It’s amazing to finally see Daniel K. Inouye’s vision come to life,” says pharmacy student **Shane Naeole**. “I am so honored to be a part of it, being native Hawaiian, and being able to connect to my culture with my future profession.”