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## **Testimony of Jim Shon, PhD.**

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I BOARD OF REGENTS COMMITTEE  
ON GOVERNANCE board's Agenda Item

### **A. Board Review and Discussion on Strategic Plan Imperative - Fulfill kuleana to Native Hawaiians and**

- I encourage the Board to consider the state of democracy, apparent widespread lack of citizenship education, and the fragmentation of knowledge about government and civics in its interpretation and implementation of its systemwide and Manoa requirements for *any* graduate. Conspiracy theories, no matter how unsupportable, abound. Are these

- If the UH aspires to encourage, educate and prepare leaders of the future, then what a leader should know could be relevant.

Your UH Systems Mission Statements include:

## Foundational Principles

### 1. Hawaiian Place of Learning

The UH champions the principles of aloha, caring for people and place, as we integrate Hawaiian language, culture, **history** and values across the institution and its work.

*But Hawaiian history is not required.*

I would encourage the Regents to consider whether the UH, particularly Manoa, is fulfilling its Vision, Mission and Core Values.

*When not a single course in history or citizenship education is required of a UH undergraduate, how can we assert that civic engagement and cultures of Hawaii, Asia and the Pacific are part of the vision?*

### **Our Vision**

The Honors Program at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa is at the forefront of the university's pursuit of academic excellence, transformative education, and **civic engagement**, helping undergraduates craft meaningful college learning experiences that connect to their local and global communities and draw on the

**Pacific.**

*Similarly, how does the honors program deliver its mission to students in terms of "**active in civic participation and stewardship with attention to local and regional***

***issues and problems*** without any history requirements?  
*Are creating options the same as connecting all students  
with Hawaii, Asia and the Pacific?*

The Honors Program is not for everyone. What does it require?

**Our Mission**

- **Critical thinking:** Using appropriate evidence and approaches to support analysis and evaluation of an issue, participate in debate, and offer solutions
- **Communication:** Sharing of ideas and perspectives to connect people and generate dialogue
- **Engagement:** Commitment to educating the whole student while incorporating place-based learning and its contributions inside and outside of the classroom

*Recently there has been a growing dialogue as to what, if anything, is actually **required** of a Manoa graduate. Various schools are also discussing general education requirements.*

Addressing the basic commitment the UH makes to better serve all students at its four-year campuses, particularly Manoa, the following questions might be considered:

1. Are the maturity, knowledge, interests circumstances of high school = to college students? Many students are older as well. This has been articulated as a reason not to require history.
2. Some push back against teaching history has come from faculty who believe it is irrelevant to the goals of their students. Is it true that technical/ scientific / medical students need not know about history or democracy?
3. Is it true that requiring specific general education courses, done in the past, is just too difficult or irrelevant? True, there are categories of options a

student may choose from, but history per se is never required for graduation.

4. For prospective social studies teachers at any level, are they *all* required to take at least one history course? All elementary level teachers will be called upon to teach some history, especially of Hawaii. But sometimes we substitute other related courses.
5. For many years, UH Manoa hosted an educational policy center (HEPC). This was eliminated through a single email. Also erased in recent years was the policy center in Political Science headed by Colin Moore. The Center on Aging has struggled to keep its independence and rigor. High profile directors have come and gone.

So, a basic question is whether the University as a whole, and the four-year campuses in particular, would benefit from a greater commitment to independent policy analysis and reports on higher education, and other key issues that the UH purports to support? Sometimes, such independent (uncontrolled?) input is resented or resisted. What

As Regents, you are volunteers and often must accept what administrators assert. However, their view may not be the most helpful in making policy for the UH. Their view may be much rosier than the reality or challenges in implementing your own mission, goals, values and plans.