

Ten myths about UARC

Myth #1. A UARC fits fine with UHM as a “Hawaiian place of learning.”

Wrong: UHM’s understanding of itself as a Hawaiian place of learning is in part an acknowledgement that the Mānoa campus is located on land originally belonging to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i and then ceded back to Hawai‘i upon statehood in 1959. The prescribed purpose of this ceded land is *education* for the people of Hawai‘i, not military research.

The notion of a Hawaiian place of learning is recognition of the special contributions of Hawaiians and their culture to making what it is today. The U.S. military however has a long and continuing history of destructive intervention in Hawai‘i, from assisting in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and to the present day abuse of Hawai‘i lands. Thus a close new relation between UHM and the U.S. Navy seems particularly incompatible with the University’s responsibilities to Hawai‘i and Hawaiians.

Myth #2. The money that UH acquires by establishing a UARC amounts to \$50 million dollars over 5 years, and the start-up funding of about \$3 million will be quickly recouped.

Wrong: The contract promises a *maximum* of \$10 million per year for three years, with the possibility of extension for two more years. The Faculty Senate’s committee that examined the UARC business plan showed that it could take decades to recoup the University’s initial investment—if ever. After all, the money brought in, however much it is, is earmarked for running the UARC, not for improving the University. Worse yet, not all of the UARC funding will be new. Some will be existing grants, rerouted through the UARC.

Myth #3. The UARC is just business as usual. There is no problem with classified research, since we’ve been doing such research already for years.

Wrong: The UH *system* has a very short record of engaging in classified research dating from 2001, when UH took over management of the Maui High Performance Computing Center. UH *Mānoa* has far less involvement with classified research. In fact, as of last September Mānoa had never supported a grant application for a classified product. A very small number of projects had been designated classified after they were underway; but there had never been any intent to undertake classified research at Mānoa (whether “on” or “off” campus). Last year the Mānoa Faculty Senate reaffirmed its opposition to pursuing research if the results cannot be promptly published. In short, the UARC is something radically different, an open invitation for the Navy to issue task orders for classified research.

Myth #4. Opponents are mistakenly claiming the UH UARC will be used to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Wrong: UARC opponents don’t believe the Navy would be silly enough to assign such a task to professors and students at a university. University people are just not obsessed enough with silence to keep tremendous secrets like *that*, and UHM in particular has far too weak a record of guarding even obviously hazardous materials!

What opponents of the UARC argue is that developing parts of weapons and improving weapons systems, which is the Navy’s specific purpose for establishing a UH UARC, are inappropriate institutional commitments *for UHM*.

Myth #5. UARC research will be off campus or at least in its own building.

Wrong: UARC will have no dedicated building for its labs. The research is to be shoehorned into existing space on the Mānoa campus, a startling plan given the extreme shortage of space for labs, offices, and classes that UHM has recently documented. Classified research will perhaps be off campus, possibly on the mainland or on military bases (poor locations for administrative oversight).

Myth #6. UARC research will aid the US war on terrorism.

Wrong: None of the documents the University has posted about the UARC claim that it will help combat terror. Our UARC specialties are to be (1) oceanographic research, ranging from marine life to buried mine detection; (2) astronomy-based tools; (3) advanced electro-optical systems, detectors, arrays and instrumentation; and (4) engineering projects concerning the electromagnetic spectrum.

It is highly improbable that developments in these fields will assist in ending Islamic or other extremism. Isn't it better public policy to envision the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa as a place of free and open exchange of creative ideas, moving us in non-military ways toward a less dangerous world? As long as the University is not tied too closely to the military-industrial complex, can't it be one of the best places to question whether a war is the best way to achieve a peace?

Myth #7. Having a UARC at UH will improve the scholarly reputation and prestige of our University.

Highly debatable. This is one of the topics that awaits genuine discussion and consultation. Does setting UHM up to contribute to the development of weapons systems for the U.S. Navy contribute positively to our reputation? Does having a Navy-sponsored research program that is tiny by comparison with other Navy UARCs add to our prestige? How does sponsoring classified research that by definition no one can know about add anything positive to our reputation—outside of the cloak and dagger world of classified research?

Myth #8. University oversight over the UARC should assuage any qualms or fears we have about the work the UARC will undertake.

Wrong: "Oversight" will take the form of a joint faculty-administration committee that will however have only narrow, mostly technical grounds for rejecting a contract. Furthermore, the oversight will not seriously include the thorniest task orders, since only censored versions of classified projects will be available for review by the watchdog committee. Worse yet, the claim of oversight has recently proved to be a sham at one of the premier U.S. universities: the US military is currently denying MIT permission to investigate fraud charges at its own Lincoln Lab, an institution similar to a UARC

Myth #9. The UARC will be approved after a full campus consultation.

Wrong: Although for a year many members of the campus community have requested an opportunity to explore the larger public policy implications of the UARC, the only campus "consultations" to date have been 1) pro-UARC propaganda sessions organized by RCUH, 2) pseudo-discussions in which administration officials played the roles not of moderators or inquirers but of advocates, and 3) senate meetings in which larger policy questions were deferred or put off limits.

Myth #10. UARC opponents are a bunch of loonies wearing monkey suits and disrupting meetings.

Wrong: Faculty, students, and community members who oppose or even just question the UARC proposal have been forced into unconventional behavior, also known as street theater, in order to be heard. The administration has sidestepped open discussion of the public policy questions raised by dedicating a research center to task orders for the U.S. military. *Is it too late to talk now?*