



SAVE UH/STOP UARC COALITION

Interim President David McClain
Members, Board of Regents
University of Hawai'i

January 12, 2006

Dear Interim President David McClain and Members of the Board of Regents:

We were surprised to learn that the Interim President scheduled another 'informational meeting' on January 20th at 1:00 p.m. regarding the proposed UARC Navy research program at UH. Such a meeting is unnecessary and should be canceled because UH's key stakeholders, as well as the community have already soundly rejected the UARC.

In fall 2005, the faculty senate passed a resolution opposing UARC. A few weeks later, the Mānoa Chancellor released her decision to oppose UARC, and recommended to the Interim President that the proposal not be advanced to the Board. These important voices joined the chorus of opposition to UARC: The Kualii Council of Native Hawaiian faculty, the UH Student Caucus -- representing all student governments throughout the UH system, the Associated Students of UH -- representing the undergraduate students at UH-Mānoa, and the UH Professional Assembly -- the faculty's system-wide union, all publicly oppose a UARC of any type at UH.

For fourteen months, the UH administration attempted to institute a UARC contract, without the free, prior, or informed consent of those in our community affected by the military research. There is also evidence that the push for UARC is but the latest in a series of attempts over the past several years to enter into personally lucrative, sole-source, federal contracts. These attempts triggered a federal investigation into corruption, which is currently under way at UH. This is of tremendous concern to our coalition, as it is certainly to the Board as the university's fiduciary.

At several instances since fall 2004, members of our university community have demanded a 'hearing'. By that term, it was intended that individuals would have an opportunity to speak to the UARC proposal, and that the university administration would take a particular course based on the democratic sentiment and collective wisdom expressed by the community. The first attempt by the administration to accommodate democratic input was an utter failure: a series of three "informational meetings" were convened in which a handful of speakers lectured the audience about why the UARC should be approved. In the second meeting, a consultant, paid by UH to promote UARC, delivered a rosy description of classified military research. His affiliation with the UARC proposal and his paychecks from UH were not disclosed to the public, until a person in the audience raised those facts as a concern. That meeting ended in a storm of public disapproval and the third meeting was never held.

The State Legislature also convened public hearings where our elected officials and many citizens expressed concern about the UARC proposal. In Spring 2005, UH officials held a second series of meetings, in which community members were allowed to speak albeit in micromanaged snippets. The meetings featured a large diversity of voices speaking in opposition to UARC, as well as a minority handful supporting the proposal. Unfortunately, the

administration was intent on moving forward with the proposal in spite of the overwhelming public opposition. It is in the wake of this effort by UH officials to undermine the democratic process at UH that the Save UH/Stop UARC Coalition undertook a peaceful protest at the UH administration building. To negotiate the return of Bachman Hall, the Interim President promised to hold a public hearing.

Although the decision-making process created by the Interim President during the summer of 2005 failed to specify a public hearing date, the community still managed to make itself heard through the process and the proposed Navy UARC was found unsuitable for our university and our home.

Holding another “informational meeting” at this juncture is, at best, a moot point; at worst, it represents another attempt by UH officials to alter the decision-making process to suit their own ends. To salvage the credibility of UH and its leaders, the Interim President should follow the process he created, and abide by the decision of the Mānoa Chancellor to oppose UARC. Dr. Konan listened attentively to the concerns of her campus, and terminated a dangerous and divisive program. By trying to resurrect and redirect the UARC proposal now, the Interim President is usurping her responsibility, undermining the legitimacy of the faculty senate and the student governments, and dividing our university.

This sets a dangerous precedent. It demonstrates that the administration is unwilling to play by its own rules when it is losing. To impose a UARC on Hawai‘i and alter the intellectual and ethical alchemy of this great university is not a short-term financial booster shot, but a perversion of our university motto: “above all nations humanity,” and a stinging contradiction to our stated goal of building “a Hawaiian place of learning.”

The purpose of a hearing is to listen to the voices of those affected by an important decision. The communities of Hawai‘i continue to overwhelmingly oppose the institutionalization of a UARC in any form at UH; now it is incumbent on the leaders to listen. By continuing to promote the UARC in the back rooms of UH, D.C., and our Hawai‘i nei, UH leadership is not only failing to uphold a basic standard of transparency and accountability, but is also calling into question the very autonomy of Hawai‘i’s most advanced educational institution.

Please cancel the January 20th unnecessary “informational meeting” and focus on moving UH forward past this controversial UARC plan. If, however, the “informational meeting” goes forward, we request that it be a fair hearing, where the public is allowed to speak freely about their concerns over the UARC proposal. Limiting each individual’s comments to 3-minutes is not only unreasonable, but disrespectful to the community, especially if the Administration is given unlimited time to make its sales presentation. We expect that Mānoa’s Vice Chancellor of Research Gary Ostrander will not be speaking on behalf of the UARC proposal as the Mānoa campus leadership has already rejected the UARC proposal. Also, to ensure a transparent and open process, we request that all of the written testimony received on the UARC is made available to the public before the meeting begins.

Sincerely,
The Student, Faculty, and Community Members
of the Save UH/Stop UARC Coalition