

September 2, 2008

Aloha!

The new academic year is beginning at UH Mānoa and thousands of new and returning students are back on campus to pursue their educational goals. This is always my favorite time of year because of the energy and enthusiasm the students generate – working with them is truly a great joy and privilege for all of us at UH Mānoa. I also have the joy of interacting with so many of our over 155,000 Mānoa alumni, as well as our many friends – you are a member of a very impressive group of folks!

This year has a very special aspect – it is the beginning of UH Mānoa’s second century. I am grateful that my first year serving as UH Mānoa’s chancellor coincided with the celebration of the University’s centennial – a time when we honored the past, celebrated the present and envisioned the future. Working together, we have the opportunity to set the stage for our second century – one that holds the promise of greatness. Our state and our students deserve our shared commitment to realizing that promise.

To achieve the promise of greatness, I believe UH Mānoa must excel as: a destination of choice for students, faculty, staff, the community and beyond; a leading global research university solving society’s problems; and, a respectful, inclusive community that nurtures diversity.

I am deeply impressed with those who have made Mānoa their destination of choice. That certainly includes our students who are our future – a strong motivator for our faculty and staff who strive to ensure that students are well prepared to succeed and contribute to the well-being of our state and our world. It is a privilege to see many examples that illustrate our students’ abilities to contribute and excel. This year, students have taken the lead on “Sustainable Saunders,” a collaborative effort among faculty and students to pursue workplace sustainability. Students started by installing Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) in Saunders Hall. A small Vertical Axis Wind Turbine was donated and has been installed to provide an opportunity for students to study the potential of wind-generated power in an urban environment. This project is raising awareness and assisting the campus in ensuring that we use natural resources in the most effective, sustainable manner possible. Our students are making their own scientific breakthroughs as well. Just one great example is senior Tiffany Baring. She won first prize at the national convention of the American Association of Anatomists for her research that suggests the existence of a previously unknown gene regulating brain development and tumor formation. I encourage you to learn more about what is happening at your university by visiting our recently revised and refreshed website: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu>.

Our campus is fortunate to have students both from Hawai‘i and from around the world. Students have told me that a great attribute of UH Mānoa is the multicultural global experience they share during their time here - on the campus and in Hawai‘i. I am convinced that the learning environment at Mānoa prepares them well - both to compete in any situation and to be responsible local and global citizens. Our State and our world need such leaders for the future.

As a land, sea and space grant institution, our mission is to solve society's problems, and research plays a major role in meeting that mission. Our research enterprise continues to be robust and impressive and serves Hawai'i in many ways – generating advances that improve our lives and creating future careers for our students. Our researchers produce new knowledge at a rapid pace, ranging from discovering a link between the loss of smell and the onset of Parkinson's disease in men to determining the mass of the coldest class of "failed stars" using ultra sharp images from the Keck Telescope and Hubble Space Telescope, to enhancing cultural understanding through international partnerships, to utilizing algae for biofuel production and the list goes on. Such advances are critical to improving the future for our children and grandchildren.

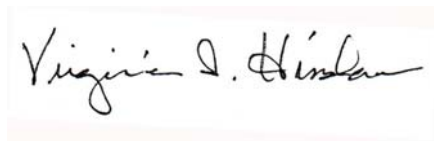
Our faculty and staff are the core of our university and many are recognized both locally and internationally for their significant contributions. Mānoa has benefited from strong faculty and staff and that has been the foundation of our first century of excellence. We do recognize, however, that faculty, students and staff need a physical environment that supports their learning and research efforts and UH Mānoa does have challenges in that regard. I frequently state that "UH Mānoa is a jewel in many ways, particularly intellectually, but is badly tarnished physically." Restoring the luster to our flagship campus is my highest priority because I realize that it cuts across all of the goals I mentioned earlier. The good news is that we can address this issue and are starting to make progress in that regard. A great example is our 'new' Frear Hall – the first new residence hall at UH Mānoa since the mid-70's. The first residents -- 810 students moved into this beautiful facility on August 23rd.

In June we began the renovation of the Campus Center which, when fully completed, will provide our students with a much-improved gathering place – and truly a 'center' to our mauka campus. The Clarence T. C. Ching Foundation is helping transform our makai campus, creating a space for intramural competition, band and cheerleading practice. It will serve as the back-up football practice field, host track and field competition and welcome community events.

Looking forward, one of the immediate challenges we are facing, along with all of Hawai'i, is a softening economy and budget cuts. To handle this challenge, we are not planning to "do more with less," but rather "better with less." At the same time, we are actively seeking to increase revenues from other sources to support our ability to serve Hawai'i.

In closing, we enter our second century with a strong sense of optimism. I do believe that this time is truly our "Mānoa Moment," and our actions now will define a bright future for UH Mānoa. Our university is woven into the fabric of Hawai'i – from our athletic teams to our alumni to our new freshmen (the "graduating class of 2012"). There is much to celebrate and there is much yet to do. Mahalo for staying connected with your university and enabling UH Mānoa to serve society in the best way possible.

With much aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Virginia S. Hinshaw". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a light-colored rectangular box.

Virginia S. Hinshaw
Chancellor

P. S. I invite you to participate in Mānoa Homecoming 2008, an exiting ten day October celebration full of events and activities. For information go to <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/homecoming>.