HEPC TESTIMONY  
July 17, 2014  
Board of Regents Meeting,  
Presented by Shannon Hillman, Student and Researcher.

RE: Student tuition costs at the University of Hawai‘i and additional Metrics to consider.

Members of the Board,

I am Shannon Hillman, a Ph.D. student from the COE and currently the educational researcher for the Hawai‘i Educational Policy Center. I am also the Co-chair for the COE Doctoral Students Association and have been its member since 2011 as well as a GSO representative for 2 years.

Today, I would like to present from the view of a student. An issue unique to full time students, that no one can fully understand until they are one, is their living situation. Much planning and effort must be given by full time students and the result is ultimately where you are continually striving for better quality of life while trying to maintain good grades.

To use my first year of life here as an example, I came to Hawai‘i from Japan in 2011. I had no contacts beyond my new advisor, David Ericson. I missed out on Graduate student housing and through Craigslist, arranged to rent a room for $500 a month about 2 miles from UH through an elderly lady that I quickly discovered had mental health issues. I bought a bike immediately and it became my primary mode of transportation. Whatever groceries I could fit into my back pack from the local supermarket often added up to more than I expected and my diet quickly became poor.

In short, it was not a comfortable or convenient living situation, though it was what I could afford and I made do. After that first year, I was lucky to receive several small grants from the COE that have altogether, paid for 1.3 semesters of tuition and fees at the military exempt status I currently hold.

While I dealt with the tuition expenditures as expected, the cost of living was what really took its toll on the savings leftover. This issue of cost of living is something I believe is not fully considered when decisions are made about tuition increase. See below data on the cost of living in Hawaii in terms of the regional price parity, and tuition + cost of living per the 2013 UHERO study.

Regional Price Parity
In 2012, scoring 117.2, Honolulu had the highest Regional Price Parity (RPP) in the U.S.A. Higher than New York (115.4) and California (112.9), meaning that its market for consumer goods was higher than some areas renown for expensive living. So while our cost of attendance is often comparable to the averages of our Peer and Benchmark universities, when we account for the Cost of Living in Hawai‘i, we can see how quickly some students will fall into debt and become stressed in general. I have personally known 3 non-resident students who had to leave Hawaii after their 1st year here due to costs of living combined with tuition.

Included in this testimony is a table from IRO that gives figures on the combined cost of living and attending UH. For my degree and 1st year non-res status, it is currently set at $56,000 per year and expected to rise to $63,000
in 2016. I have to be honest and say that if these figures were current three years ago, I, as a visiting lecturer living in Japan with no fiscal responsibilities, could not afford to attend UHM or live in Hawai‘i, even had I wanted to pay that amount.

The July 9, 2014 presentation to your Subcommittee included this chart on page 19, which indicates an undergradua
te loan debt of over $21,000. I would like to point out this would probably be higher for graduate students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UH Campus</th>
<th>UH ANNUAL Tuition and Fees 2013-14</th>
<th>UHERO 2012 Av ANNUAL Student Cost of Living</th>
<th>Estimated Total Student ANNUAL Expenditures Tuition + Other 2013-14</th>
<th>UH ANNUAL Tuition ONLY 2016-17</th>
<th>UHERO 2012 Av ANNUAL Student Cost of Living</th>
<th>Estimated Total Student ANNUAL Expenditures Tuition + Other 2016-17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UH Manoa</td>
<td>$9,904</td>
<td>$27,472</td>
<td>$25,631</td>
<td>$11,376</td>
<td>$32,904</td>
<td>$25,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
<td>13,116</td>
<td>30,660</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>15,288</td>
<td>36,768</td>
<td>25,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Biz</td>
<td>10,025</td>
<td>17,201</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>21,288</td>
<td>38,352</td>
<td>25,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Edu</td>
<td>13,116</td>
<td>30,660</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>16,824</td>
<td>38,280</td>
<td>25,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Nursing</td>
<td>20,244</td>
<td>37,788</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>24,024</td>
<td>45,504</td>
<td>25,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law JD</td>
<td>19,026</td>
<td>36,930</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>22,392</td>
<td>45,816</td>
<td>25,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>32,298</td>
<td>65,922</td>
<td>25,631</td>
<td>32,672</td>
<td>71,328</td>
<td>25,631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The July 9, 2014 presentation to your Subcommittee included this chart on page 19, which indicates an undergraduate loan debt of over $21,000. I would like to point out this would probably be higher for graduate students.

| UH Hilo    | $6,536                             | $18,296                                    | $23,817                                                       | $7,656                         | $20,160                                    | $23,817                                                       |
| Undergraduate | 9,680                           | 21,752                                    | 23,817                                                       | 11,568                         | 26,328                                     | 23,817                                                       |
| Graduate   | 15,584                             | 30,800                                    | 23,817                                                       | 18,744                         | 32,392                                     | 23,817                                                       |
| Pharmacy   | 19,904                             | 37,208                                    | 23,817                                                       | 23,376                         | 40,320                                     | 23,817                                                       |

HEPC is currently sourcing out a survey to students to get their opinions and feelings on issues such as tuition, life during and after university. Since the survey went live last week to COE Ph.D. students only, I have had several emotional emails from students who took the survey who want me to be aware of their current situation and how they did not feel it was adequately represented in the survey.
I have included an excerpt from one of these emails from a Ph.D. student from Hilo.

“In the first year of my doctoral program, I got into $16K in debt -- not because of tuition, which thankfully I had tuition waivers that covered that portion -- but in travel costs to fly to Oahu on a weekly basis, in having to buy a used car, pay for a room and board in someone’s home, buy food and gas, and for parking my car at the airport and on campus. Since I could not afford to take out another $16K loan in my 2nd year, I was able to TA an online class and take some online classes that were being offered.

I am about to go into my 3rd year and there are few online class options. But at this point, I cannot afford the time to travel to Oahu and another $16K for the expenses of living on 2 islands. I am procrastinating on making any hard decisions about possibly not being able to finish my doctorate because of the circumstances of living and working on one island while only having the option of going to school on another island. It makes me wonder how many others are in my shoes or not even trying to achieve higher education because of the difficulty in doing so.”

One last graph I would like to draw attention to is a very preliminary result from our survey (the survey can be found in full in the Appendix). It is in regards to the question on how students feel about tuition prices.

Please check one of the following in regards to your feelings on the price of your tuition.

Many choices have been given, with only 2 indicating negative feelings. You will notice that nearly a quarter of responses have chosen to answer ‘other’ and submit their own responses. Most were elaborations on negative feelings. Here is a few of them;

“Grateful to have a GA. Would not be attending without it.”
“It isn't as expensive as the other private colleges here, or online, but I still had to take out a loan and get a stipend in order to afford it”
“It was higher than anticipated and I struggled to pay it.”

If these results are true to the rest of the sample (we hope to have a sample size of over 600 when the survey is released to the larger UH population), then under 30% of students are satisfied with tuition rates at UH. While it is obvious that not everyone will be satisfied with the amount they are paying and we expect that students would always prefer cheaper tuition, this means that we have 70% of students are unsatisfied, a large majority.

I would like to thank the BOR for allowing me to present this testimony today from a student’s perspective.
Shannon Hillman

Doctoral Student, COE

Educational Researcher, HEPC
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**APPENDIX**

**Hawai’i Educational Policy Center Student Survey on Cost and Debt.**

Our objective is to gather data and understand the concerns of the UH System student population in regards to their cost of living and current/ future debt. Results will be presented at our upcoming forum on Student Debt to be held in September.

This survey has 25 questions and takes approximately 2 minutes to complete.

* Required

To ensure you attend UH, please provide your @hawaii.edu email. *
(We will never use this and it will be deleted once the survey closes.)

What is your gender? *
- Male
- Female

What is your age group? *
- 18-22
- 23-30
- Over 30

University/College Campus Attending *
Choose your primary campus

What school/college do you mostly associate with? *

Level of Education Currently Pursued *
- Undergraduate
- Graduate

Status *
- Full Time
- Part Time

Tuition Status *
- Resident
- Non-Resident

Where are you currently living? *
- At home with family
- In a dorm
- Sharing a place off campus with others
- I have my own place
How concerned are you with the cost of attending college? *

1234567890

Please check one of the following in regards to your feelings on the price of your tuition. *

○ It is very unreasonable, but I have no choice but to pay it.
○ It is unreasonable, but I can afford it.
○ It is an average price for college tuition. I have no feelings either way.
○ It is a reasonable price, no where else is better for my studies.
○ It is a reasonable price and I can afford it.
○ It is very reasonable and I happily pay it.
○ Other: ______________________

Do you know people who can not afford college? *

○ Yes
○ No

Do you know someone who can not afford to attend UH? *

○ Yes
○ No

Do you know of someone who chose to attend a mainland college because it was less expensive than UH? *

○ Yes
○ No

Did you delay your current enrollment due to the cost of tuition and fees? *

○ Yes
○ No

Do you need to work to pay for the cost of college (including GA, TA and any other work on campus)? *

○ Yes
○ No

How many jobs do you currently have? *

○ None
○ 1
○ 2
○ 3

Tuition costs are rising each year. Could this affect your graduation plans? *

○ Yes
○ No
WITHOUT any scholarships, grants or loans, what would the full cost of your tuition be for your most recent semester? *
Choose an answer closest to your cost.

WITH scholarships, GA'ships, grants or loans, what IS the cost of your tuition for this semester? *
Choose an answer closest to your cost.

What amount of debt do you expect to have upon graduation? *
Choose an answer closest to your debt.

How confident are you about gaining employment after graduation to pay off your debt? *
12345

How important was the cost of attendance in your decision to attend UH? *
12345678910

How important is the overall cost of living in Hawaii in a decision to continue at UH? *
12345678910

Is the cost of living in Hawaii combined with tuition leading you to consider transferring to another university. *
○ ○ Yes
○ ○ No

For GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY- How much debt from your undergraduate degree do you still owe?
○ ○ <$5,000
○ ○ $5,000 - $10,000
○ ○ $10,000 - $20,000
○ ○ $20,000 - $30,000
○ ○ >$30,000