An Open Letter to University of Hawaii Faculty

Aloha UH Faculty Members:

Two weeks after Hawaii became a state in 1959, I arrived here in Hawaii for a teaching assistantship in sociology for the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Little did I know then that this job, which started from a posting I saw on a bulletin board at Union College in Schenectady, New York, would lead me to my new home. At UH, I helped organize the first faculty union. When I was in Hawaii's Senate, I chaired the Higher Education Committee and did my best to support the growth of the UH. I have always been and remain committed to higher education.

After 50 years of calling Hawaii my home, I am running for Governor—which will be the culmination of all my experiences, as a University of Hawaii teaching assistant and graduate student, and Leeward Community College lecturer to Honolulu City Councilman, state legislator and Congressman.

Recently, I released my economic plan to rebuild Hawaii's economy. The University of Hawaii plays a critical role in bringing this plan to fruition. Saving and creating good jobs now and for the future, providing greater financial security, and ensuring long-term sustainability for our state are key components of this plan, and University of Hawaii faculty, along with private-sector partners, are at the very core of this economic transformation process.

As Governor, I will work to restore what has been taken away and explore innovative ideas to support faculty because I know that backing faculty, the backbone of University of Hawaii system, translates into support for Hawaii's families and our entire community.

Whether it is producing more of our own energy in our Islands, growing or raising more of our own food or developing a sustainable visitor and hospitality industry that values cultural and environmental preservation, our success ultimately can be traced to what happens on our University of Hawaii campuses. Conducting research and preparing students to take their places in the marketplace ultimately rests in the hands of all of you, our faculty. The community colleges, with record-high enrollment, will continue to play a significant role in workforce development. As many return to school to learn new skills, our community colleges will be key to preparing Hawaii's people to take on new jobs as our economy is transformed.

It is for that reason that I'm committed to ensuring faculty have the resources they need to carry on the university's mission not only as an institution known for excellence in teaching and research, but also as a vital economic engine in our state. This will also help to make sure a college education remains accessible and affordable for Hawaii working families and that Hawaii's children do not have to go elsewhere to learn, work and live.

I applaud those faculty members who are taking the lead in obtaining research grants to uphold the University of Hawaii's reputation as a quality research institution. Under an Abercrombie administration, I will use my relationships established in Washington, D.C., to capitalize on every single federal dollar available for education to our state. This is one of the ways we can continue to enhance and expand educational and economic opportunities so that the University of Hawaii can remain on the cutting-edge of research and in workforce development.

Mahalo for your commitment to public higher education. Together, we can end economics-as-usual in Hawaii and usher in a new, academic-centered leadership that will reflect your commitment to excellence.

Sincerely,

Neil Abercrombie