# Community applauds Department of Native Hawaiian Health – Queen's Health System renews financial support as new Chair installed |

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The vision of a better Hawaii shared by the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine and the diverse communities its serves was brought into sharp focus on February 11, 2011, in a moving ceremony celebrating the appointment of a new Chair of the Department of Native Hawaiian Health.

"The department is the only the clinical department in a U.S. medical school with a department dedicated to an indigenous people," said Dr. J. Keawe'aimoku Kaholokula, the incoming Chair. "We are defined by our communities."

"We are a clinical department without the word 'medicine' in its name," Kaholokula continued. "We understand that the health of a people requires more than medicine, it's about how we feel about our lives and how we are interconnected with each other."



Top: Dr. Keawe'aimoku Kaholokula, Above: Dr. Kaholokula dancing hula, photos by Ron Paik / Iris Chen

UH Manoa Chancellor Virginia Hinshaw noted that the Department of Native Hawaiian Health was formed in 2002, and officially established by the Board of Regents in 2003. “Since the beginning, the Queen’s Health System has nourished the program financially to the tune of a total $5 milllion,” said Dr. Hinshaw.

The ceremony included a special salute to Queen’s Health System, which this Spring has pledged an additional $2 million to support the department and its Imi Ho’ola Post Baccalaureate Program. The Imi Ho’ola program recruits and supports college students from humble and minority backgrounds in a year-long course which launches them into medical school at JABSOM.

“You cannot have a premier health care system or medical center without a first-class medical school,” said Dr. Naleen Andrade, an Imi Ho’ola graduate who now Chairs the Queen’s Health Systems, as well as JABSOM’s Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Andrade led applause for Queen’s CEO Art Ushijima, who she said shared the sentiment that the state’s health care system requires a vibrant medical school.

Also honored at the ceremony was the Department of Native Hawaiian Health’s first chair, Dr. Marjorie Mau, recently named one of the National Institute of Health’s “Faces of Biomedical Science”.  Mau is one of only 13 national researchers identified as mentors for future American scientists.



Dr. Marjorie Mau, the first chair of the Department of Native Hawaiian Health, photo by Ron Paik / Iris Chen

For his 20 months of service as interim chair of the department, JABSOM Dean Jerris Hedges congratulated and thanked Dr. Kalani Brady.  Dr. Nanette Judd, UH Manoa's 2010 Faculty Diversity award winner, was recognized for her leadership in steering the Imi Ho'ola program for the department for 30 years.

"Over that time, Imi Ho'ola has graduated more than 200 physicians, 40 percent of them Native Hawaiians," said Dr. Jerris Hedges, JABSOM Dean. "And 60 percent of those Native Hawaiian physicians are working right here in the Islands serving Hawai'i's people," said Dr. Hedges.



Dean Jerris Hedges, photo by Ron Paik / Iris Chen



A full audience attended the ceremony at Kulia Grill, photo by Ron Paik / Iris Chen

Also speaking in recognition of the department was Puni Kekauoha, the Executive Director of Papakolea Community Development Corporation.  Along with Dr. Kaholokula, Kekauoha is a Co-Principal Investigator for the PILI ʻOhana Project, which is reducing obesity among Native Hawaiian people by partnerships with community organizations.

“The medical school partnership has opened our eyes to the importance of research,” said Kekauoha. “There are more than 30 of us in Papakolea who are healthier right now because of the school and its research and clinical outreach, and we are grateful,” she said.

**Please also enjoy this video of the event (by Ron Paik / Iris Chen):**