

Kamehameha Schools Faculty Association

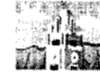
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From the 10/28/97 Star-Bulletin ...



Police say Maui youths brought illegal knives to school to show friends. A-4



Operator of the City Store owes more than \$180,000 and could lose its contract if it doesn't pay. A-5

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Plan cited in criticizing Bishop Estate

A 1992 accreditation team recommended that teachers have more input

BY GORDON Y.K. PANG
Star-Bulletin

A critic of Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate assailed a long-awaited strategic plan released to faculty and staff yesterday as further proof that teachers have no voice in decision-making.

"We have all kinds of people planning this, but none are teachers," said Beadie Dawson, spokeswoman for Na Pua a Ke Ali'i

Pauahi, a group that has been critical of actions made by the estate's trustees.

"The teachers had absolutely no input on this," Dawson said. "This was going to be announced to them and given to them."

Dawson's comments echoed those made by a 1992 accreditation team from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

That report recommended that: "The Board of Trustees and the (Kamehameha Schools) president seek greater faculty and staff involvement in major school-wide changes which may personally and professionally affect them."

In a 1995 update to the association, the schools responded: "Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate is a hierarchical organization. Decision-making and institution-wide planning is primarily conducted at the top levels as these duties are viewed as the responsibilities of the trustees and principal executives."

"Thus, faculty and staff do not have a major role in the decision-making process."

The response added: "However, when changes are made, all KSBE staff members are informed of the rationale for such changes and the timeline for implementation."

Kamehameha is up for re-accreditation next year and administrators are currently conducting a self-evaluation in preparation for a visiting team slated to visit Kapaemahu Heights next spring.

Dawson said the report was done by the strategic education plan team facilitated by trustee Lokelani Lindsey.

The 18-member team consisted of, among others, legal counsel Nathan Aipa; alumni office director Marlene Sai; and new KSBE budget officer Yukio Takemoto.

"There are no faculty and no faculty chairmen," Dawson said. "They have included these inap-

propriate people and excluded all the appropriate people."

The teachers have remained largely silent over governance at the schools, particularly since four student leaders were reprimanded for speaking publicly.

The GoForward strategic plan given teachers yesterday says the first goal is to "increase accessibility to KSBE education programs for children, youth, parents of students and adults of Hawaiian ancestry."

Ironically, the schools chose in 1995 to gut its longtime outreach programs, which resulted in the loss of 170 jobs, critics said.

Viewpoints

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Broad-Based Admissions

A Moral, Practical, and Political Non Sequitur

Among my friends and even my acquaintances (alas, a much larger group) most look upon the broad-based admissions initiative rather skeptically. A reaction that I share but can take no credit for. I do, however, have a few friends that disagree with me. This would seem a golden opportunity for a delightful discussion if the issue were not so complex, passions not so intense and consequences not so far reaching. So, this much too lengthy article is for my disagreeing (but not disagreeable) friends who now have the options of not reading it and not listening to me.

As I understand their disagreement, my friends take the moral stand that the best and brightest are somehow less deserving to be the beneficiaries of Pauahi's will because there are others who are more needy and deserving. Send the best and the brightest to Punahou or Iolani they say and let Kapalama be available to lesser students. I doubt the wisdom of their solution (sending talent elsewhere) and challenge their moral assumptions about who is more needy and deserving. How does one fairly quantify neediness or deservedness so that it can be used as an admission criteria? Imagine trying to explain to a parent (or the grandmother's lawyer or Kahu) that their daughter (or granddaughter) is 2.37 points less needy or deserving than the brat down the street whose lack of social and other skills better fits the admissions matrix and has earned him the right to attend Kamehameha Schools. Why, pray tell, are parents and students who work hard to make something of themselves less deserving of assistance than those who have failed to do so. Does it not help fulfill Pauahi's goal relating to good and industrious to encourage Hawaiians to help themselves so that they can earn further assistance? What behaviors will we encourage and what messages are we sending if we purposely withhold assistance from the

achievers? Frankly, I think attempting to morally justify which child is more deserving or needy is as hopeless as trying to nail Jell-O to a wall. Can anyone fairly quantify such a subjective evaluation? Fortunately, the task is irrelevant. The fact is all children are needy and deserving regardless of how they are grouped. The choice of who Kapalama serves should not be a function of degrees of neediness or some other unmeasurable (and therefore unfair) criteria but how we can do the most good for the most Hawaiian kids with our limited resources.

Assuming we are willing to be practical and are smart enough to avoid basing admissions on unfair criteria, how can we do the most for the most? Let's consider my disagreeing friend's suggestion first. What would be the effect of sending the best and the brightest (B&B) to Punahou or Iolani? First of all, depending upon how B&B is defined, it is possible that a large number of our current students would not qualify for, want to go to, or do well at these schools even if KS paid their tuition. Furthermore, the adverse impact of rejecting the B&B is not confined to the B&B themselves. Their absence would profoundly weaken our school with the impact on those remaining being far worse than that on those sent elsewhere. While the B&B have flourished at our school, as evidenced by numerous awards and rising SAT scores, they were not destined to earn those and other achievements. Whether or not they would have attained these successes anyway at another school is not something that should be assumed. Is it not possible that after one hundred years, Kapalama has evolved into an institution of educational excellence that works better for Hawaiians? Keep in mind that it is not only the B&B who have flourished. Kamehameha has traditionally admitted a wide range of talent including a

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significant number of students with academic scores well below the Punahou and Iolani cutoffs. These students have also done well and almost all have been accepted at various colleges. This is no small achievement since approximately 25% of our high school entrants are taking one or more solid subjects at the basic level. What do you think causes these and the regular track students (the middle 60%) to strive to be something better? Who would be their role models if the B&B were sent to Punahou or Iolani?

Every classroom needs a critical mass of the best and brightest to ignite the energy and imagination of our ordinary students who have a tendency to follow the pack, give up too easily, and avoid work. The best classrooms operate much like nuclear fission where the B&B function as the highly radioactive material that excites the other less mentally active material. For the B&B to be an effective influence, the class mix is crucial. If only a few in the class try hard enough to master the tough stuff, they irritate rather than inspire the reluctant learners whose dormant lifestyles are threatened by a few lone achievers. If a few more try and succeed, the pack begins to realize that the tasks are reasonable and doable. As more talent is added to the mix, the thrill of achievement creates a chain reaction of rising expectations that begin to sweep over the class and those with potential but limited work ethics begin to stand out and find it hard to resist. Good teaching skills reduce the number of B&B necessary to sustain the chain reaction but only slightly. Good teachers will make more effective use of the B&B but they rarely replace them. Without the nuclear fuel provided by a critical mass of B&B, the teacher must supply too much of the energy, excitement and encouragement and when that falters the class becomes passive and learning slows or stops. In addition to being leaders and teachers, the B&B are irreplaceable because most students look to other students to define what is reasonable and achievable. They

help set the norms when the ordinary student is establishing his/her own personal goals. Watching a teacher do a difficult task proves nothing to most students. Teachers are creatures from an easier world who were born with that ability when they hatched out of their egg fully formed and already educated. Observing a bright student succeed, however, is much more compelling. Watching others follow the B&B puts the lazy conformist between a rock and a hard place. The more B&B you have in a class, the greater the chance is that their enthusiasm for learning and helpful attitude will become contagious and the ordinary students will become radioactive and the chain reaction will spread.

What would happen if the B&B were replaced by lesser achieving students with potential and/or character (two more unmeasurable admissions criteria)? Would the SAT scores and college acceptance rate of those remaining (i.e. those ordinary students excluding the new replacements) continue at the same high level? Probably not, unless you believe that good examples have no influence. How much they would drop would depend upon the interaction of the new mix. Practically speaking, if we were trying to do the most for the most, we would be systematically experimenting with various talent mixtures to see if we replaced this group with another how it would affect the output of the school in some measurable way. All sorts of success parameters could be used: test scores, college acceptances, college performances, post graduation salaries, employment rates etc. Maybe there is a point where adding more B&B would produce less than an acceptable marginal increase in doing the most for the most and this could practically justify a decrease in the talent mixture. But this is not what we are doing. What we are doing is for political purposes. We are not trying to increase the output of the school (producing more or better good and industrious men and women), but rather it appears that we are

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trying to appeal to or appease the beneficiaries.

What's wrong with appealing to the beneficiaries? Shouldn't they have the major voice in determining their inheritance? Of course, except for the restrictions imposed by Pauahi's will, they should be the primary advisors to the trustees. I am neither a beneficiary nor an expert on the intentions of Pauahi, but it appears to me she did an excellent job in constructing a will that would do the most for the people she loved. She empowered her trustees (the wisest and most trustworthy people she could define) to make decisions that would use education as a means to promote opportunities for Hawaiians to become good and industrious men and women. For whatever reason (I would like to believe it was extraordinary foresight), she did not choose to empower the beneficiaries to make the decisions directly. She was certainly wise enough to realize the political perils of democratizing a benefit funded by limited resources that could not directly help even half the population. In accordance with the will, the proper political role of the beneficiaries is to provide informed advice to her trustees. The problems are that it looks like certain decisions have already been made, the beneficiaries are being both manipulated and appeased, and the decisions diminish the value to the beneficiaries because they ignore the practical consequences previously discussed.

In spite of denials at the highest levels, why do the majority of my friends and acquaintances believe broad-based admissions is a done deal? In addition to their unfortunately high level of skepticism, recent changes in admissions procedures and suspicious data collection practices are more than enough reasons for them to conclude that the hand writing is on the wall.

Regarding the first reason, the current admissions procedure changed this year to de-emphasize academic qualifications. In place of using teachers to interview applicants to evaluate their potential for academic success at our school (some-

thing teachers are well qualified to do and something of practical value that will help determine if our school is the right tool to help them become good and industrious men and women), we are now being asked to evaluate character and cultural qualities (something so vague and subjective that our set of questions and interviewers cannot possibly do fairly).

Regarding the second reason, two recent KS data collection efforts (the lottery study and the phone survey) seemed contrived to support the broad-based admission decision. The lottery study was either pointless or it was designed to infer that Kapalama could do a good job on lower ability kids. It discovered obvious results: Children can benefit from special treatment. It failed to identify the nature and costs of the special treatment and failed to qualify its results by explaining how the special treatment differed from the educational experience afforded the ordinary students. It did not investigate the impact of the few lottery kids who were mainstreamed on the level of learning achieved by the ordinary students. All these omissions contributed to the effect of making the study appear to be a selective presentation in support of broad-based admissions.

The phone survey suffered from so many statistical collection deficiencies that it will be hard to evaluate fairly. Except for the comments at the end which could provide valuable anecdotal insights, it should be ignored. Sampling was a major problem. As far as I could tell, there was no way to categorize who (beneficiary, non-beneficiary, alumni, rejected applicant, student, teacher, employee, or non-involved busybody) was responding and no way to prevent multiple responses by the same individuals. The questions asked and not asked were also problems. What do you learn by asking questions about how important it is to help people in various ability groups when the responders are not clear what the consequences or alternatives are? Are we appealing to their emo-

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tions or intellect? Shouldn't such a survey be preceded by some discussion of the pros and cons of each question? Or, was the vote taken now because the results of the survey are predictable?

The final problem with the political handling of broad-based admissions is that the beneficiaries are being both manipulated and appeased. Far from being informed and included so that they can provide responsible input, the beneficiaries who get involved may have to rely on the selective data like that noted above. Equally disturbing is that many who would object have been neutralized by the packaging of the concepts in pleasant sounding and misleading words that don't alert them to the nature and magnitude of the change being considered. You have to ask why the overall label broad-based admissions was selected when lowering the admissions standards would have been far more accurate. Last week, after the telephone survey had been completed, I asked my freshman homeroom class of 19 students if they or their parents had ever heard about or discussed broad-based admissions. They responded blankly and unanimously that they had not. I asked them what they thought it meant. No one was even close. One thought it meant accepting non-Hawaiians. The closest guess was that it had some vague relation to becoming more like a public school. When I told them what it meant, all seemed surprised. If broad were the only example of misleading terminology, I would be less concerned. But when I hear the word diverse being used as a result or goal of broad-based admissions, I begin to think that people are being intentionally misled. Diverse normally comments on ethnicity but in this case has the same meaning as broad which means replacing higher level students with those with less talent than previously accepted. When consistency is touted as a goal for all three schools, I am convinced that there is intent to mask the true purpose of broad-based admissions. Consistency normally has the positive meanings of logical thinking or

fair application, but here it is used to justify making the schools more alike. Why should sameness be a goal? Why not excellence?

In summary, helping children become good and industrious men and women is a noble mission. Extending the reach of that mission is also a wonderful goal. But, it makes all the difference in the world how you attempt to do it and what it costs. It does not appear to me that broad-based admissions is consistent with the sound moral, practical, and political principles that will allow it to further these goals. The moral arguments in support of broad-based admissions do not encourage Hawaiians to help themselves become good and industrious. The practical argument that broad-based admissions will do the most for the most has not even been attempted, probably because the cost per student for lower ability students is significantly higher even though they will learn less. In other words, we will be doing less for less. The attempt to politically justify the initiative has not ensured that the stakeholders were sufficiently informed about the consequences and alternatives. If implemented, I doubt history will look kindly on broad-based admissions when the consequences are known to all.

— Bill Follmer, Unit 9-10

Faculty members are encouraged to submit articles to the Viewpoints section of our newsletter. Only if we make it so, will this will be a place where ideas are openly and freely debated . Let's model intellectual freedom for the students.