

Questions & Answers

Blending of Culture and Science
Session 2: Conservation of Our Ahupua'a
Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Q: Can you talk more about the ahupua'a system and the speakers' work connection to this topic?

The ahupua'a system has been described extensively. Each of us have different kinds of links with these systems, ranging from genealogical to scientific researcher. Ahupua'a boundaries were not just watershed boundaries - they were political and dynamic. Further, our understanding of the diversity of ahupua'a and how they functioned expands each year through research at the University of Hawai'i, and by community hui across our pae 'āina caring for and restoring ahupua'a systems.

Websites for more information: Waipa foundation, paepae o He'eia, He'eia NERRS, Waiale'e

Gonschor and Beamer - <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Toward-an-Inventory-of-Ahupuaa-%E2%80%98a-in-the-Hawaiian-%3A-Gonschor-Beamer/4fd5c1f40dc10dd6c46b9c1a191190873eb21309>

Winter et al. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/10/3554/htm>

<https://www.americanscientist.org/article/a-hawaiian-renaissance-that-could-save-the-world>

Q: As an "outsider," how do you see the UH system as an ahupua'a? What are the strengths and areas for growth that you see necessary to educate students to be competitive with "imports" from continental universities?

The team does not see the UH system as an ahupua'a.

This question seems to imply that our students are working in a deficit, that they need to be "more" in order to be competitive in their own home islands, in their own forests, oceans, streets, communities. If we focus instead on highlighting the skill sets, knowledge, and understanding that our island students bring to projects and research related to our island resources and communities, that can shift the metrics of what is competitive. Professionals and heads of agencies and nonprofits in many fields in Hawai'i report that hiring local young people is critical to workforce longevity as transplants from outside Hawai'i tend to stay a few years, then leave. That said, many organizations - including our own state government and even university researchers recruiting students - require training, certifications, and degrees that are not offered in Hawai'i. We need to analyze these both from the employer perspective (are those requirements essential?) as well as from the university perspective as to how we need to shift our programs to meet 21st century needs to help our island resources and communities thrive.

Q: Many on this call are deeply engaged in the management, history and engineering of fishponds and other sustainable programs - how might we systemically engage University research teams with us as we work to develop sustainable programs?

We mention here just a few areas across the university where engagement is already taking place: Rosie and KUA's engagement with the Hui Malama Loko I'a; Kūlana Noi'i effort of Sea Grant and KUA; NERRS partnerships - and impacts of those conversations in developing co-produced research in which the loko i'a kahu leading the collaborations

Q: What do the panelists see happening around the development of well-paid conservation work that would allow our children to stay home and do mālama 'āina oriented work?

While in many ways this is outside the purview of the university (i.e., how do we grow industry pay), well-paid conservation work requires organizations--i.e., research funders, federal and state governmental agencies--to put a higher price tag on the value of this work. Many researchers and managers applying for funding to support efforts underpay staff in order to be competitive for grant money. That needs to change. Additionally, there is a need to redefine what "mālama 'āina" careers are...careers that help our place and communities thrive into the future are all related to mālama 'āina, and all of those are important. Maybe the question is better put - how do we shift people's perceptions of the value of those efforts and roles adequately compensate those responsible for that work?

See 'Āina Aloha Economic Futures <https://www.ainaalohafutures.com/>

Hawai'i's Green Jobs Report <https://www.hauolimaui.org/2018-report-characterizing-hawaiis-natural-resources-management-sector-jobs-education-salaries-and-expenditures-september-2019>

Q: Perhaps, the panelists could define what 'science' means to them. The term is being used extensively in this conversation and maybe defining it would help to make a better connection to indigenous ways of knowing.

This is a huge and exciting ongoing conversation. We agree that defining and discussing the terms of science, indigenous science, Science versus science, etc. are all important in helping us bring different ways of knowing to the table to address societal needs and trajectories.

See work of:

Robin Wall Kimmerer and the Center for Native People's and the Environment <https://cnpe.home.blog/>, Noelani Puniwai on Pono Science <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4a2F47NupCw>, work of Katie Kamelamela, Sarah Kahanamoku, Rosie Alegado and masters and dissertations of our many Native Hawaiian students graduating with science degrees from this University system.

Q: How would you interpret Biden's landmark memo on indigenous knowledge in regarding communities as expert institutional leaders and the UH System as the conservator of information?

The team felt they were not able to answer this question without clarification on what the person meant by the question.