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Pressure from lawmakers could leave UH flattened

It's incredible that weeks after University of Hawaii regents emerged from a secret meeting declaring unwavering support for UH President M.R.C. Greenwood, they're now holding secret meetings reportedly to discuss firing her.

It's time to end this academic carnage; our university's credibility can't survive if we keep sending high-priced administrators back to the mainland in body bags stained with the bloody fingerprints of meddling politicians.

The Greenwood drama is disturbingly similar to the grisly 2004 firing of Evan Dobbelle from the same job.

The same key legislators are again leading the agitation — and again, they seem motivated by personal pique as much as policy.

Certainly Greenwood must answer for mistakes in the Stevie Wonder fiasco and other management concerns illuminated in its wake.

But equally certain is that regents wouldn't be discussing firing her a year after extending her contract until 2015 if not for pressure from legislators furious that she refused their demand to restore Jim Donovan as athletic director after his department lost \$200,000 in the concert scam.

Lawmakers are further angered that she's called them out for political interference that threatens UH independence guaranteed by the state Constitution.

Leading the legislative clamor have been Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Rep. K. Mark Takai.

Kim's one-sided hearings aimed to embarrass Greenwood and the regents while allowing Donovan to blame everybody but himself; Takai has been the loudest voice in

the House for Donovan's reinstatement and Greenwood's head.

The two also were leading agitators for Dobbelle's ouster, publishing a commentary that accused him of improper spending and declared him a failure.

Their assault provided political cover for Gov. Linda Lingle's regent appointees to fire Dobbelle three years into his seven-year contract, costing UH \$3.2 million in severance.

A 2004 Honolulu Advertiser commentary said Dobbelle angered Kim when he wasn't properly contrite after she upbraided him for attending a meeting sponsored by Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris, Kim's enemy from her City Council days.

The commentary also reported that Dobbelle confidants said Takai became irked when the president refused him a UH job he asked for.

UH is doomed to perpetual mediocrity if we keep bringing in presidents at nearly \$500,000 a year, only to have them undermined by the personal agendas of power-tripping politicians.

Whatever you think of Greenwood — and I've criticized her as much as anybody — there are bigger principles at stake, and those who love our university must stand up for them.

The regents and Greenwood should quickly and transparently resolve the Stevie Wonder issues and work out their management differences.

The Legislature should back off and give UH a fair chance to fix the problems on its own and move forward.

If this ends with Greenwood fired and Donovan reinstated, UH deserves to lose its accreditation.

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