Astronomy center gears up for spectacular grand opening this month; faculty and staff invited to special preview

by Ken Hupp

‘Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i formally opens its doors to the public this month with a spectacular grand opening celebration.

After recently settling on a new name, officials at the former Mauna Kea Astronomy Education Center are now turning their attention to unveiling the $28 million state-of-the-art facility.

“This is the moment we’ve all been waiting for,” said Center Director Peter Giles. “Everybody who has had a role in making this project a reality is proud of what they have accomplished, and can’t wait to show it off.”

UH Hilo and HawCC faculty and staff are invited to a special preview of ‘Imiloa on Wednesday, February 15 from 9 a.m. to noon. A short program begins at 9:30 a.m.

U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye, who has been instrumental in securing the Center’s funding from NASA, will participate in the two key grand opening events. Inouye will be the guest of honor at a major fund-raising dinner scheduled for February 19, and at a blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony the following day.

Construction and landscaping for the 42,000-square-feet exhibition and planetarium complex located on a 9.1-acre parcel in the University Park of Science and Technology was completed last November. ‘Imiloa, which means “exploring new knowledge,” will provide a unique experi-

Giles gets second “once in a lifetime” opportunity at ‘Imiloa

by John Burnett

Peter B. Giles is impressive on spec. Upon meeting, his blue eyes engage yours with tractor beam intensity and precision as he grasps your hand firmly and smiles warmly. His impeccable grooming, clean pate and deep, commanding voice all lend to his aura of easy authority. He appears to be a CEO from central casting, a cross between former C. Brewer and Co. chairman and CEO J.W.A. “Doc” Buyers and actor Patrick Stewart.

Giles, who signed on in August as director of the ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i (formerly the Mauna Kea Astronomy and Education Center), comes to Hilo with 18 years experience in museum management. He served as president of The Tech Museum of Innovation (a.k.a. “The Tech”) from 1987-2005, and was the person UH Hilo Chancellor Rose Tseng turned to when Dr. Marlene Hapai resigned last year to care for her ailing and elderly mother.

“Rose and I first crossed paths when she was on the Board of The Tech,” Giles said. “She came to Silicon Valley in May last year and called me on my cell phone. We arranged a meeting and she told
ence for visitors, students, and families seeking to explore the connections between Hawaiian cultural traditions and the science of astronomy.

The Center will showcase interactive exhibits, planetarium shows, group tours, a museum store featuring the Island’s largest collection of books focusing on Mauna Kea astronomy and ancient Hawaiian navigation, a restaurant, and a full schedule of events.

The architectural design displays three titanium-covered cones, representing the volcanoes of Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa and Hualalai. The cones provide a distinctive and highly visible landmark, easily seen by visitors arriving by air and driving into Hilo from almost any direction.

“This will be a world-class showcase for the discoveries taking place atop Mauna Kea presented in the framework of the Native Hawaiian culture,” said Chancellor Rose Tseng. “We also see the Center as a major visitor attraction that will become synonymous with Hilo.”

The public will be treated to a special “preview” opening on February 21, offering a free glimpse of the exhibits, planetarium and other displays. However, one feature they are unlikely to fully experience is the 110-seat restaurant, which will not be operational in time for the opening.

“This is a great opportunity for the public to walk through the facility and get a taste of what the Center will offer,” Giles said. “We’re confident they’ll like what they see and come back after the Center officially opens for business on February 23.”

Center staff will also host open house events for kupuna, teachers, personnel from the Mauna Kea observatories, media and visitor industry officials over a nearly two-week preview period leading up to the formal blessing and grand opening.

Once open, the Center will rely heavily on volunteers, particularly from the observatories and its own UH Hilo family. Giles says the Center hopes to involve faculty in a wide range of activities.

“We believe the faculty has much to offer as expert resources, program speakers, hosting special events and other activities,” Giles said. “They’ve played an important role in the Center’s development and will be equally important going forward.”

The actual hours of operation and admission prices are still being finalized, but the Center will initially be open Tuesday through Sunday, with extended hours for nighttime visits on Friday and Saturday. Tentative plans call for ‘Imiloa to be open seven days a week by summer. The facilities will also be available for private events, by reservation.

For preliminary information about admission, membership, and group tours, please contact Marketing Director Gloria Chun Hoo at 969-9705. Those interested may also visit the ‘Imiloa Web site at www.imiloahawaii.org, where volunteer applications can be accessed and filled out online.

(Editor’s note: Ken Hupp is a public information officer.)
Purdue educator named first UH Hilo dean of College of Pharmacy

The University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents recently announced the appointment of Dr. John M. Pezzuto as founding dean of UH Hilo’s College of Pharmacy. Pezzuto will assume his new duties on June 1, 2006.

Pezzuto currently serves as dean of the College of Pharmacy, Nursing and Health Sciences and holds the rank of professor of medicinal chemistry and molecular pharmacology at Purdue University, where he has been since 2002.

“I’m very pleased that we were able to attract such a high caliber candidate for this important position,” said Chancellor Rose Tseng. “Dr. Pezzuto’s extensive experience as an administrator and researcher will enable him to hit the ground running in creating this new College.”

Pezzuto earned an A.B. in chemistry from Rutgers University in 1973, and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in 1977, where he is a distinguished alumnus. He later spent two years as a National Cancer Institute Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1977-1979.

He began his teaching career as an instructor of chemistry at the University of Virginia in 1979. The following year he joined the University of Illinois at Chicago where he remained until 2002. Originally hired as an assistant professor, he worked his way up to distinguished professor status in the Colleges of Pharmacy and Medicine. He also served twice as head of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmacognosy, director of the program for Collaborative Research in the Pharmaceutical Sciences, and associate dean for Research and Graduate Education in the College of Pharmacy. He received a Research Career Development Award and an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship.

Active in research, his current interests include natural products as inhibitors of chemical carcinogenesis, biological evaluation of potential cancer chemotherapeutic agents, biospecific isolation of chemotherapeutic agents from plant materials, evaluation of test agents for cancer preventative and therapeutic activity employing animal models.

Pezzuto has been supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) continuously since 1977. He is the author of over 400 manuscripts, the editor of the journal Pharmaceutical Biology, the holder of many patents, and a member of several editorial boards. He currently serves as the principal investigator of a Program Project grant in cancer chemoprevention. The studies, which began in 1991, have explored the properties of naturally-occurring substances from land and ocean-dwelling organisms that might prevent or delay the onset of cancer. Funding was renewed last year when Pezzuto’s team was granted more than $6.8 million by the National Cancer Institute to continue their research for another five years.

“While it is difficult to leave the top-ranked school of pharmacy at Purdue, the opportunity at Hilo is very exciting and highly unique,” said Pezzuto. “The level of enthusiasm for the creation of this new college is incredible. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish a world-class College of Pharmacy that will dramatically improve the profession in this region of the world, while at the same time creating a new center of high level scholarship. I am very pleased the University of Hawai‘i has made this important decision, and delighted to be able to provide leadership in this important initiative.”

The UH Hilo College of Pharmacy will offer a four-year program of study leading to the doctor of pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree. The school will become the first College of Pharmacy at a public institution in Hawai‘i and the Pacific islands region, and is being designed to meet the comprehensive pharmacy education needs of Hawai‘i and the U.S.-affiliated Pacific islands. As the founding dean, Pezzuto will oversee fund-raising and curriculum development for the new College, as well as the necessary approvals by accreditation authorities.
Hats off to...

Thom Curtis, Associate Professor of Sociology, presented two papers at the December 2005 International Conference on Social Science Research in Orlando, FL: “Native Hawaiian Perceptions of Violence as a Means to Attain Sovereignty” and “The Path to Jihad.” The latter analyzes the lives of 98 U.S. citizens who have been identified as participants in illegal terrorism or terrorist support activities.

Linda Marie Golian-Lui, University Librarian, and Judith Fox-Goldstein, Director, Conference Center, were inducted into the Hawa‘i County “Women’s Hall of Fame” last October with four other women. Golian-Lui was selected by her peers in 2005 as one of 51 top librarians nationwide. Fox-Goldstein has a national reputation for her contributions to education and the visitor industry.

Patti Urso, Assistant Professor of Nursing, had her paper on “Comparison of Nursing Student Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Hybrid & Online Courses” accepted by the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education. The SITE conference will be held in Orlando, FL next month. The paper was co-authored with Robert Chi of UH Hilo.

Terrance Jalbert, Associate Professor of Finance, had his paper on “Geographic Focused Mutual Funds: An Empirical Analysis of the Portfolio Properties of a Hawa‘i Focused Fund” accepted for publication in the Academy of Financial Studies Journal. The paper was co-written with Chantelle Schieven.

Philippe Binder, Associate Professor of Physics, has been selected as a Scholar at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Seven KITP Scholars are selected annually from all non-Ph.D. granting physics programs in the U.S. The program funds three visits to KITP over a three-year appointment period to enable Scholars to participate in research programs that cover a wide range of topics in theoretical physics.

Joan Thompson, Assistant Professor of Nursing, recently completed a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner specialty through the University of California, San Francisco.

Jonathan Dresner, Assistant Professor of History, has been awarded the Cliopatria Award for Best Group History Blog of 2005 for his Asian History Blog project which he cofounded over a year ago. The project is at http://froginawell.net.


Yoshitaka Miike, Assistant Professor of Communication, has been asked to serve on the editorial board of China Media Research. CMR is an official publication of the American Chinese Media Research Association and the Communication Institute of Zhejiang University in China. The English-language quarterly journal aims to provide a platform for communication scholars in China and the U.S.
Distinguished alumni awards event set for February 24

On Friday, February 24th, the UH Hilo Alumni and Friends Association hosts its annual Distinguished Alumni and Distinguished Service Awards Banquet at the Campus Center Dining Room, starting at 5:30pm. This year’s Distinguished Alumni honorees are Dr. Gregory Chun, Dr. Henry Lee-Loy, and Mr. Jim Melody. The Distinguished Service recipients are Mr. Robert Fujimoto and Mr. Dwight Takamine.

“The accomplishments of these honorees have led to the increased support and growth of UH Hilo, and their efforts have had a direct positive impact on various departments and programs at UH Hilo,” commented Marketing and Alumni Director Yu Yok Pearing.

The cost of the banquet is $45. The RSVP deadline is February 17th.

For more information, contact the Marketing and Alumni office at x47643 or x47501.

‘Imiloa/Distinguished Alumni highlight Focus on UH Hilo

Focus on UH Hilo features programs on the University’s soon-to-open astronomy center and this year’s distinguished alumni and service awards during its February telecasts. The program is hosted by Chancellor Rose Tseng, and airs Wednesday evenings during the instructional year from 8:00 – 8:30 p.m. on Channel 55.

Peter Giles, director of ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i, appears on the February 1st telecast. Giles will preview ‘Imiloa’s grand opening scheduled for this month, and discuss various features, programs and activities that the Center will offer.

The February 15th telecast features Gail Makuakane-Lundin, chair of the 2006 Distinguished Alumni and Service Awards Banquet. Makuakane-Lundin will discuss this year’s recipients and the event that will honor them later this month.

Focus on UH Hilo highlights UH Hilo programs, up and coming developments and the University’s partnerships with various community organizations.
Nishioka selected Employee of the Quarter

by John Burnett

Assistant Fiscal Officer Jo-Ann Nishioka has been named UH Hilo’s Administrative Affairs’ Employee of the Quarter. Nishioka is a familiar face in the Business Office, having started there in 1989 as an account clerk and working her way up to her present position.

“Jo-Ann is a very committed employee and always looks at the big picture, the UH Hilo campus, Administrative Affairs and the Business Office,” wrote her nominator. “She does not look only at the duties outlined in her position description but will look at all the ways that she can contribute to our campus. She has participated in many committees, providing input from the knowledge she’s gained in her 16 years of employment at the Business Office. She is an excellent team player and a great asset to our campus, division and department.”

According to the nominator, Nishioka approaches her job in an innovative way.

“Jo-Ann was assigned the task of implementing the purchasing card for UH Hilo. She was responsible for organizing mandatory training sessions held at the UH Hilo campus and worked closely with the UH Procurement Office on policy and procedure issues. It was necessary for Jo-Ann to establish a review and filing system that would stand up to audit. Since the implementation of the P-card, both the number of cardholders and number of transactions have increased dramatically. This program has been a success on our campus largely due to the commitment and hard work of Jo-Ann.”

Nishioka says she enjoys her job and finds her on-the-job learning experiences at UH Hilo especially rewarding.

“It’s great working with the people in the office and with my counterparts on the other UH campuses,” she noted. “I was so surprised as this was unexpected and I believe there are many others that are deserving of this award.

“I would like to thank Dr. Bill Chen for his generosity and to all my co-workers that have been so supportive.”

Mahalo! Third annual Night in the Stacks a big success

The UH Hilo Administration extends a big Mahalo to the ‘ohana for helping make the third annual Edwin H. Mookini fund raiser, A Night in the Stacks 2005: Leis of Aloha with Marie McDonald and Friends, a great success. Approximately $28,000 was raised, exceeding the fund-raising goal of $20,000. All funds raised will provide vital support for the collections and programs of the Edwin H. Mookini Library.

The event was once again co-hosted by Chancellor Rose Tseng, Hawai‘i Community College Chancellor Rockne Freitas, and Mrs. Esther “Kiki” Mookini, wife of the late Chancellor Edwin H. Mookini. Night in the Stacks 2005 also benefited from the support and assistance of four honorary chairs: Mr. Ken Herrick (former University Librarian, Dr. Fujio Matsuda (former president, University of Hawai‘i), Mr. Russell Oda (principal, Durrant-Media Five), and Mr. Eugene Tao (former editor, Hawai‘i Tribune-Herald).

The Mookini Library partnered with Borders of Hilo to provide guests with the opportunity to meet local authors, purchase their books, and have them autographed. Author signings included: Kiki Mookini, translator of Anatomia; Mr. Larry Kimura, author of Mamaka Kaina: A Modern Hawaiian Vocabulary; Mrs. Nancy Tom, co-author of Fred Tom: Son of Hawai‘i; Mr. John Penisten, author of Experience the Big Island; Ms. Kekuhi Kanahele-Frias, singer and chanter on her CD Pohaku, and Drs. Jim and Sonia Juvik, co-authors of Atlas of Hawai‘i. Borders donated 20% of all purchases made during Night in the Stacks 2005 to the Edwin H. Mookini Library’s Foundation Account.

Corporate sponsors also contributed to the success of Night in the Stacks 2005, including Big Island Candies, Hawai‘i Island Glass, Hawaiian Linen Supply, Hilo Printing, KTA, Kui & I, and the Naniloa Hotel.


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Spotlight
Continued from page 1

me about the Mauna Kea Astronomy and Education Center, which we're now calling the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i. She explained to me that this was an opportunity. It was getting ready to open and would I come over and take a look at it? So I did; so here I am."

As he had at The Tech, Giles takes over the helm of a start-up project in progress.

"I was asked to take over the project in San Jose in 1987 and I thought it would be a great project to help with and make happen," he explained. "It was a museum of high technology and technology learning center and it had a lot of stuff written about it, but was having trouble getting off the ground. They asked me to do it because I knew the valley very well. I wasn't in museum management; I was president of Silicon Valley Manufacturing, which is now called Silicon Valley Leadership, which is an economic development and quality of living organization. But I relished the opportunity to bring in something that would stimulate learning in young people, and that's what we did. And that's what I think 'Imiloa has an opportunity to do."

One of the first items of business was to change the name of the interpretive center and planetarium-in-progress.

"The Mauna Kea Astronomy and Center was a name that everybody felt was a working title, a placeholder," he said. "We wanted to have a new name. We were calling it MKAEC and it just didn't sound very exciting. And also, there are so many things on the Big Island named 'Mauna Kea' -- on both sides of the island. And it's a name that's not that well known outside of Hawai'i. We think of it as a big and important mountain, but when a lot of people in California and other places think of Mauna Kea, they think of the Mauna Kea Resort. It's not really clear, but Hawai'i is really clear. And the center of astronomy in Hawai'i is right here. So we thought, 'Hey, it makes sense. Let's talk about astronomy in Hawai'i, not just astronomy on top of Mauna Kea, and let's call it 'Imiloa, because it's a Hawaiian name and we're also about the Hawaiian language and culture.'"

"Imiloa is a name that our Hawaiian advisors recommended. It means 'to explore and to seek after profound knowledge.' I thought that was a great name. Now, we can teach the world what 'Imiloa means."

The $28 million, 42,000 square-feet facility is set to open February 23 in the University Park of Science and Technology, but there will be a great deal of hoopla in the two weeks prior to opening, as the 'Imiloa will host a gala preview celebratory dinner for U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye Feb. 19th and an invitation-only blessing the following morning, as well as events for UH Hilo and HawCC faculty, K-12 teachers, astronomers and other personnel at the Mauna Kea observatories, visitor industry officials, local kupuna and for all who worked on the facility and their families.

"Right now, that's kind of our marketing program, because we don't have any money that we can freely spend on advertising or anything else," Giles noted. "We're here. We've got a chance to roll this out to the community, and this is the way we're going to do it. We're hoping that between February 9 and when we open for the general public February 23 we give them all a good experience, so they'll all come back with their friends and families when we open for business on the 23rd. Pretty much, all of 'Imiloa but the restaurant should be completed by then."

Giles, the father of seven grown children and grandfather of 10, has been working 10-12-hour days, six days-a-week to help oversee the Center's completion. His wife, Leanne, has also been working as a volunteer, keeping the same hours at the museum as her husband.

"We try to celebrate the good times, because there's a lot of hard work ahead," he said. "We've got a great team that's gelling here. I think we are going to be able to bring something special to Hilo in a very special way."

Giles said that he considered his work at The Tech "a once in a lifetime opportunity." He said that overseeing 'Imiloa's initial opening means "a once in a lifetime opportunity has come around a second time."

"I think I was attracted to this job by the fusion of the Hawaiian language and culture and the astronomy," he said. "I think the fusion of the two makes this a very interesting and very challenging proposition -- and a very attractive one, especially if it's done right and the programming is appealing. We can do something very special here, because I think astronomy is a big draw in terms of people interested in science and learning about the universe and our place in it. And Hawai'i is something that I think the world is fascinated with. People want to come here and they can't get enough of it. And they want to know what makes Hawai'i such a special place. And to me, the fact that Hilo is the center for the resurgence of Hawaiian language and Hawaiian culture and is, at the same time, the leading place for astronomy in the world is a very interesting juxtaposition. And I think that gives us a tremendous opportunity to bring these two elements together, both of which I think are important for the world we live in."

"The Hawaiian values, which include equilibrium with your environment and a connection with the past, present and future in terms of family, those things are extremely important for the existential world that we have here and now," he added. "And I think astronomy is a wonderful complement to that, because of the holistic view of looking at the contributions of science and looking to the contributions of culture, and finding in that marriage, a place for a child to grow up in that is progressive, open to new experiences, but doesn't ignore the past and the connections to language and culture that have made Hawai'i a special place to live."

(Observer's note: John Burnett is a public information officer.)
Campus Events

February

1  Vulcan baseball vs. University of Kansas, 7 p.m., Wong Stadium, Admission
   Focus on UH Hilo, 8 p.m., channel 55
2  Vulcan baseball vs. University of Kansas, 6 p.m., Wong Stadium, Admission
3  Vulcan baseball vs. University of Kansas, 3 p.m., Wong Stadium, Admission
8  Vulcan baseball vs. Wichita State, 6 p.m., Wong Stadium, Admission
9  Vulcan baseball vs. Wichita State, 3 p.m., Wong Stadium, Admission
11 Vulcan basketball vs. Hawai'i Pacific University, 7:15 p.m., Civic, Admission
15 ‘Imiloa preview for UH Hilo/HawCC faculty/staff, 9 a.m. - Noon
   Focus on UH Hilo, 8 p.m., channel 55

16, 17 Vulcan baseball vs. Washington State, 3 p.m., Wong Stadium, Admission
20  Holiday: Presidents’ Day
21  ‘Imiloa free preview day for community, 1-4 p.m.
23  Vulcan basketball vs. BYU-Hawai‘i, 7:15 p.m., Civic, Admission
24, 25 Vulcan softball vs. Simon Fraser University, Noon, UH Hilo Field
24  UH Hilo Distinguished Alumni and Service Awards Banquet, 5:30 p.m., Campus Center Dining Room, Admission
25  Vulcan basketball vs. BYU-Hawai‘i, 7:15 p.m., Civic, Admission
27  Job & Internship Fair, 10 a.m., Library Lanai
27, 28 Vulcan softball vs. Notre Dame deNamur, Noon, UH Hilo Field