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NEWS RELEASE

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UH West O'ahu Chancellor Rockne Freitas announces retirement

KAPOLEI – UH West O'ahu Chancellor Rockne Freitas announced his intent to retire at the end of this calendar year, following a nearly 23-year career in key leadership roles with the University of Hawai'i.

“I am the happiest man in the world to have served the University of Hawai'i, but I am retiring to begin a new journey, spend time with people that I love, go fishing, and work out,” Freitas said.

Freitas was a pioneer in Native Hawaiian advancement in both higher education and professional sports. He was the first Native Hawaiian permanent chancellor at a four-year University when he took the reigns at UH West O'ahu in May 2013. He was also the first Native Hawaiian to make all-Pro in the National Football League, a feat he accomplished three times.

“We're incredibly grateful to Rockne and fortunate that he chose to serve Hawai'i's university for 23 years,” UH President David Lassner said. “He tackled diverse leadership positions for us, first in the UH Mānoa athletics department and then in his first stint as a UH vice president. After his return to UH he also served as chancellor at two different campuses on two islands and played key leadership roles in our higher education startups for the most underserved regions of the State. It has been a personal pleasure and honor to work with him in many positions over many years. He has inspired me and many others with his steadfast commitment to improving access and success in higher education, especially for Native Hawaiians.”

President Lassner will be meeting with the UH West O'ahu campus in the near future to gather input on the path forward.

Under Chancellor Freitas' direction, UH West O'ahu:

- Was reaffirmed by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for seven years, through 2022, upon the strengths of its student-centered environment and creation of an organizational commitment to quality assurance by formalizing planning processes across constituencies.
- Experienced enrollment growth from 1,909 in Spring 2013, with an anticipated enrollment to reach 3,000 in Fall 2015.



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- Received \$4.1 million in operating funds and 89 positions from the Legislature in 2014.
- Received \$28.8 million from the Legislature for construction of an Allied Health/Administration building, which is expected to break ground in spring 2016.
- Was awarded \$14.2 million in Title III grants from the U.S. Department of Education for Native Hawaiian health and wellness facilities and student support services.

Freitas previously served as the UH System's vice president for student affairs and university/community relations, where he provided leadership in systemwide student affairs policies and procedures and student life activities, as well as university and government relations and communication efforts. Freitas worked on key special projects, including the development of the new Hawai'i Community College Palamanui Campus and Hawai'i Papa O Ke Ao, a plan for the University of Hawai'i to become the model indigenous-serving higher education institution in the state and the nation. He led the planning and overall effort to guide UH Mānoa's athletics programs into the Mountain West Conference and Big West Conference.

Freitas was the chancellor of Hawai'i Community College for six years, serving as the chief executive of the main campus in Hilo and its University of Hawai'i Center in West Hawai'i. During his time at Hawai'i Community College it received 73 general-funded positions.

He also served as vice president and executive director of the Ke Ali'i Pauahi Foundation and has held leadership positions at Kamehameha Schools and GRG Enterprises. Freitas also held posts as vice president for university relations for the UH system and associate athletic director for UH Mānoa.

Freitas enjoyed a celebrated 12-year career in the NFL, 11 with the Detroit Lions and one year with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He was selected to the Pro Bowl after the 1972 season. He was a part of the first Native Hawaiian father-son duo to be drafted in the NFL, along with his son Mako, who was drafted in 2003 by the Indianapolis Colts. Freitas was inducted into the Hawai'i Sports Hall of Fame and the Oregon State University Sports Hall of Fame. In 2014, he received Oregon State University's highest alumni honor as the recipient of the E.B. Lemon Distinguished Alumni Award. He also served as a trustee for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Freitas holds an EdD and MEd in education from UH Mānoa and BS in animal science from Oregon State University. His doctoral research focused on developmental systems and guidelines for drug prevention, education, monitoring and counseling for intercollegiate athletics.

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