KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS TEACHERS SPEAK OUT:

Faculty must participate in decisions

The following statement is by Na Kumu o Kamehameha, an organization of faculty at the Kamehameha Schools.

As members of Na Kumu o Kamehameha, our commitment to our students, the true beneficiaries of our beloved Ke Alii Pauahi, compels us to act as she would have to maintain an open line of communication with all who care about the welfare of Kamehameha Schools and the children.

Our four designated representatives — Carolyn Kehui Abad, David Kavika Eyre, Charlene Hoo, and Gary Osebert — have worked tirelessly on behalf of Na Kumu o Kamehameha.

In September they were individually reprimanded by the administration and were threatened with dismissal if they made any further public statements.

It must be noted, for the record, they have made no public statements as individuals. The letter published over their names in the Honolulu Advertiser on July 13 was written at the direction of and on behalf of Na Kumu o Kamehameha. In support of our representatives, 160 of the 200 signed Na Kumu members have published their names in a house under a statement which attests to this fact.

Since their reprimand, others, including trustees and administrators, have presumed to speak for the faculty by presenting their interpretations of faculty issues and faculty morale. The purpose of this article is to update the community by speaking out on our own behalf.

Trustees haven't responded

As educators, our focus has never wavered from our allegiance to the education of Pauahi's children and our understanding of her vision. We feel privileged to be the teachers of her children.

Last May the news of unrest at Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate first became known to the public. The Kamehameha community cared deeply enough to respond dramatically through the May 15 march. At that time, members of the faculty and staff gathered to discuss their concerns and decided to initiate dialogue with the board of trustees.

On several occasions we have sent formal letters to the board requesting a private, in-house forum for the purpose of resolving issues. As of this writing, the trustees as a board have not responded to any of these letters. Consequently, the majority of the faculty of Kamehameha has organized at Na Kumu o Kamehameha. We were then informed that because we were
What's this about?

The Bishop Estate is trustee for the lands of Bernice Pauahi Bishop, great-granddaughter of Kamehameha I, who died in 1883. The estate was managed to provide for the educational needs of Hawaii. In 1978, the Bishop Estate Board of Trustees, in response to growing public concern over the estate's management practices, agreed to work with the public to improve the estate's operations. This led to the establishment of the Bishop Estate Commission, which was charged with overseeing the estate's activities.

On May 15, 1984, hundreds of parents, students, alumni, and supporters converged on the University of Hawaii at Manoa to express their concerns about the estate's management. The public hearing was part of a nationwide effort to bring about greater accountability and transparency in the estate's operations.

Our inspiration

It has helped us all to look to the history of Kamehameha Schools for guidance and inspiration. Charles Reed Bishop provided the answer to the significance of the name "Kamehameha Schools." In a speech entitled "The Purpose of the School," which he gave at our first Founder's Day observance, Dec. 19, 1898: "Bernice Pauahi Bishop, by founding the Kamehameha Schools, intended to establish institutions which should be of lasting benefit to her country; and also to honor the name Kamehameha, the most conspicuous name in Polynesian history, a name with which we associate ability, courage, patriotism, and generosity."

Pauahi received her inspiration from her great-grandfather, Kamehameha the Great. She was determined to honor his legacy and ensure a better future for her people. She also hoped to honor the memory of her deceased grandmother, Bernice Pauahi Bishop, who had left a large fortune to be used for the education of Hawaiian children.

Faculty must have a voice

Na Kumu o Kamehameha is seeking a voice. Until now, the faculty has been treated in a less than professional manner by being repeatedly and systematically overlooked in the school's planning and decision-making. We have been contained and controlled for years. For the welfare of the schools, this cannot continue. We must be included as active participants in decisions that affect the education of the students of Kamehameha Schools. This is the bottom line. Any quality educational institution would allow nothing less.

Contrary to reports about our feeling "demoralized" or about spirits being low at Kamehameh
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from both Kamehameha and Paualani. As educators we embrace Paualani's charge to her people:

"Your life is before you... It will be what you choose to make it. Times will come when you will feel you are being pushed into the background. Never allow this to happen... stand always on your own foundation. There will come times when to make this stand will be difficult, especially to you of Hawaiian birth; but conquer you can... if you will."

(Paualani was quoted in an address delivered by Mrs. Pierre Jones, Founder's Day, Dec. 19, 1953.)

We are attaching a copy of our "Statement of Concern" to the trustees of Kamehameha Schools Bernice Paualani Bishop Estate. This statement was handed to Trustee Chairman Richard Wong by a Na Pua a Ke Aliii/Paualani spokesperson at the culmination of the May 15 march. (The faculty was not allowed to have a representative deliver this document.)

The situation at Kamehameha Schools has not changed in regard to the top-down management, the unilateral decision-making, and the intimidation intended to create a climate of fear. What has changed is faculty morale. We are energized. We are determined. We look to the future. Things will change.

Expressing their frustration, members of the Kamehameha Schools community marched from the Royal Mausoleum in Nu'uanu to the Supreme Court and to the offices of Bishop Estate on May 15. They stopped at Iolani Palace (above) on the way. (The Supreme Court appoints the five Bishop Estate trustees. Kamehameha Schools founder Bernice Paualani Bishop is buried at the mausoleum.)