Chapter 15. Epilogue



(National Science Foundation)

"Ocean science can no longer be viewed as an esoteric, 'offshore' discipline. It is mainland and mainstream. The health and bounty of our oceans are issues of planetary survival."

NSF Director Rita Colwell
at NRC Symposium on Fifty
Years of Ocean Discovery
30 October 1998

Oceanography, the science of the sea, is a relatively new and important discipline. The oceans dominate Earth's surface, regulate climate, and sustain life by the production of organic matter and the oxygen we breathe. The contemporary research questions in the field of oceanography are broad and transdisciplinary with significant scientific and societal relevance. During the past 40 years – since the creation of oceanography at UH as a graduate field of study – the science of the sea has changed dramatically including the level of theoretical understanding of oceanic processes, the methods of observation, and in the sophistication of instrumentation and experimentation.

Oceanography is also a global profession; over the past several decades UH scientists have conducted marine research in all major ocean basins, and literally from the marine boundary layer to the deep abyss, and from the equator to both poles. The goal of this book was not to summarize all of the significant marine research that has been conducted at UH over the years – although that would make a very nice story. Rather, the emphasis was on the emergence of the academic programs and field research capacity. This present account, *UH and the Sea*, has attempted to chronicle the program origins, the key developments, and the leaders that have made it happen.

Although Rhode Island may lay claim to the title "the ocean state," Hawaii is the only state in the US that is completely surrounded by the sea. The 132 islands, atolls and reefs of the Hawaiian archipelago stretch for at least 1500 miles, providing Hawaii with the largest exclusive economic zone of any state in the union. So it was only natural that there was in 1907 when the College of Hawaii was founded, and still is today, an emphasis on marine sciences at UH.

The oceanography and marine expeditionary programs at UH had two distinct roots, one in geological and physical sciences following the formation of HIG in 1957, and the other in marine ecology and fisheries, mostly based in the Department of Zoology and at the HML. These diverse interests were promoted, nurtured, expanded, and eventually consolidated in 1988 with the creation of a new school – SOEST. By the end of 2002, SOEST had 185 faculty members covering a broad range of scientific disciplines.

As Count Galeazzo Ciano proclaimed, “Victory finds a hundred fathers, but defeat is an orphan.” Without a doubt, many scientists and administrators labored over the past half-century to establish the marine research opportunities that we enjoy today; our “marine victories” have had many distinguished “fathers.” However, the leadership of Robert Hiatt is unmatched in the establishment of essentially all of the contemporary UH marine programs. Over his 26-year career, by his vision and by his action, UH became a credible marine science research center. Furthermore, George Woollard – the inaugural director of HIG and founder of our modern marine expeditionary and research fleet facilities, and C. Barry Raleigh – the inaugural dean of SOEST and UH “ocean warrior,” also deserve to be singled out for their innumerable and lasting contributions to UH marine programs.

As the great modern American philosopher, Charlie Brown, used to say, “There is no greater burden than a great potential.” So it was with the UH marine science programs over the past half-century. The burden of great potential, even world-class stature, was a major source of frustration for many years and among many faculty and administrators. Even today, with excellent educational/research programs and outstanding administrative leadership in place, with modern well-equipped shore-based laboratories and a state-of-the-art research vessel at our disposal, it is accurate to conclude that there remains unrealized potential.

In all likelihood, marine sciences will continue as a high priority program at UH over the next few decades, and hopefully longer. However, the UH leadership can no longer be complacent about excellence, or be satisfied with anything less than a fully realized potential of world-class stature for their academic and marine expeditionary research programs. In reviewing the events leading to the present state of marine science programs at UH, perhaps it may be fair to conclude that the roughest portion of our extended sea voyage is over.

As UH President Evan S. Dobelle noted at the R/V *Kilo Moana* blessing on 10 September 2002 (Figure 15.1):

> “The first principle of seafaring and navigation holds that in order to know where we are headed, we must first establish where we are” – as a University system – “and plot a course toward a stronger future...” He went on to proudly state that “The *Kilo Moana* affirms the University of Hawaii as a pre-eminent ocean research community. The vessel places us among a very small fellowship of institutions with access to a ship of this kind and allows us to compete for the most exclusive and competitive research funding. The capabilities of this ship will – in the very near future – extend SOEST and the University’s reputation as a world class research facility. In turn, the additional opportunities created by the *Kilo Moana* will help Hawaii attract talented and promising scholars and students, which will further enrich both the University and the community as a whole. On behalf of the entire University community, I want to

express my deep gratitude to each one of you who worked to make this day possible. The *Kilo Moana* is an enormous blessing, and a timely one. Much of her work will serve to enlighten us as to the history and origins of these extraordinary islands – and in so doing, she will carry us toward the wider world that awaits us. In order to know where we are headed, we must first establish where we are. Today, it is my pleasure to say that we are in a very good place indeed."







Figure 15.1: (Top, left) UH President Evan Dobelle addressing the crowd assembled at Aloha Tower Marketplace for the official blessing of the R/V *Kilo Moana* (Top, right) on 10 September 2002. Shown at left is President Dobelle as he poses with members of his staff in front of the newly blessed vessel. (photos by D. Karl)