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Hawaii News

Ige considering 14 finalists for 4 UH regent seats

By [Nanea Kalani](#)

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Fourteen finalists are vying to fill four seats on the voluntary 15-member University of Hawaii Board of Regents.

The UH Regents Candidate Advisory Council, a screening committee prescribed by state law, has presented the following candidates to Gov. David Ige for consideration:

For the Honolulu seat currently filled by Jan Sullivan:

>> **Brandon Marc Higa**, a grant writer, professional actor/model and clarinetist with the Royal Hawaiian Band. Higa graduated as a Renaissance Scholar with honors from the University of Southern California with an undergraduate and master's degree in international relations. He is pursuing a law degree at UH-Manoa.

>> **Kim Coco Iwamoto**, a former elected member of the state Board of Education. She serves on the state Civil Rights Commission and previously served as a member and chairwoman of the Career and Technical Education Coordinating Advisory Council, which advises the Board of Regents. Iwamoto earned degrees from state university systems in New York, California and New Mexico, where she obtained her law degree. After law school she moved back to Hawaii and became a public-interest lawyer.

>> **William W. Milks**, the state's first consumer advocate and a former deputy attorney general. He studied at Boston College and Georgetown University Law Center and has been in private practice since 1989.

>> **Jan N. Sullivan**, chief operating officer of engineering and technology firm Oceanit.

She was appointed to a five-year term on the Board of Regents in 2011. She previously served as director of the city's Department of Land Utilization and oversaw the reorganization that created the city's Department of Planning and Permitting. Sullivan, who earned her law degree from the William S. Richardson School of Law, also was chairwoman of the Hawaii Community Development Authority.

For the Honolulu seat currently filled by Coralie Matayoshi (who did not request reconsideration for her seat):

>> **Russell R. Grunch**, a civilian logistics supervisor at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. He spent 45 years with the Air Force. He earned an undergraduate degree in management from Park College and a master's in public administration from Northern Michigan University. He has been elected twice to the Aiea Neighborhood Board.

>> **Luanna H. Meyer**, a former professor of education in Hawaii and New Zealand. She earned her master's and doctorate degrees in special education, both from Indiana University. In New Zealand she was on the education faculty at Victoria University of Wellington and was an assistant vice chancellor and professor at Massey University. She also taught at UH, the University of Minnesota and Syracuse University. She moved back to Hawaii in 2013.

>> **Russel S. Nagata**, a retired state judge. He graduated as a member of the inaugural class of the William S. Richardson School of Law and went on to work as a deputy attorney general. He later served as director of the state Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and as state comptroller. He spent 19 years as a state district judge before retiring in 2011. He currently serves as a per diem, or part-time, district judge.

>> **Michelle A. Tagorda**, the student regent on the board. Tagorda earned undergraduate degrees in psychology biology from UH-Manoa and graduated this year with a Master of Public Health in social and behavioral health sciences. She plans to enroll at the medical school.

For the Hawaii County seat currently filled by Wayne Higaki:

>> **William C. Bergin**, who established Case Memorial Veterinary Hospital in Waimea before serving as lead veterinarian for Parker Ranch for 25 years. He worked for most major ranches on Hawaii island before leaving for Kansas State University, where he earned bachelor's degrees in agriculture and biological science, a master's in physiology and a doctorate in veterinary medicine. In 2007 he established Aina Hou Animal Hospital, a full-service equine health facility, in Waimea.

>> **Wayne S. Higaki**, chief development officer for North Hawaii Community Hospital, an affiliate of the Queen's Health Systems. Higaki, who earned an associate degree at Kapiolani Community College, has worked for the hospital since it opened in 1996, including as vice president of public affairs and vice president of clinical and support

services. He was named to the seat earlier this year to fill out the remaining term of a regent who resigned.

>> **Sean A. Kirkpatrick**, who worked as an adult correctional officer at Halawa Correctional Facility for 15 years, attaining the rank of lieutenant. A former Marine, he moved to Hawaii island to care for family. He earned an associate degree in tropical forest ecosystems and agroforestry management from Hawaii Community College and has applied to UH-Hilo to further his studies.

>> **Melvyn K. Sakaguchi**, who retired after 25 years as a UH administrator, mostly in the community colleges. Since retiring he has worked as an educational consultant and mentor to students in Vietnam. He holds a doctorate in educational administration.

For the student seat currently filled by Michelle Tagorda:

>> **Jori-Anne J. Jasper**, a Kauai High graduate who earned three Bachelor of Business Administration degrees from Shidler College of Business, in marketing, international business and entrepreneurship. She holds a master's in sociology and is a second-year law student and an M.B.A. student at UH-Manoa.

>> **Priya M. Rashid**, a first-year law student at UH. She earned her undergraduate degree in political science from UH-Manoa. As an undergraduate she spent eight months in India working as a teacher at an orphanage. She volunteers at the Juvenile Detention Housing and Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility as a legal counselor.

>> **Higa** and **Tagorda**, candidates for two of the Honolulu seats, also were named finalists for the student seat.

The advisory council said it received 46 applications and interviewed 21 applicants.

"We believe each finalist offers exceptional and complementing skills that will further strengthen board governance and synergy, serve as a tremendous resource for the university and its president, and help guide and focus the institution's strategic directions in teaching, research, and community service," the council's chairman, L. Thomas Ramsey, said in a statement.

The student seat is capped at two years, while the Honolulu and Hawaii County seats are for five-year appointments, beginning July 1. The appointments are subject to confirmation by the state Senate.