

Aloha and Mahalo Dean Mary Boland

After completing nearly 16 years of service to UH, Dean Mary Boland will retire in June 2021.

Mary Boland, DrPH, RN, FAAN, has announced her retirement as dean of the University of Hawaii at Manoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (NAWSON). Dr. Boland is the longest-serving dean of the School and has led NAWSON to become a lever for local and global social change.



“The Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing is a key UH asset leading through education, research, and service,” Boland says. “During the past 16 years, I have had the honor of serving our Hawaii nei in concert with great students, engaged alumni, outstanding faculty, and wonderful community partners – all dedicated to improving health.”

The School flourished under Boland’s tenure, creating innovation within the School and the larger community. What has stood out as remarkable has been her ability to successfully execute NAWSON’s vision of a multifaceted enterprise that supports the mission of the UH through leadership, excellence, and innovation. She has the ability to bring vision to life by leveraging the skills and talents of a team of individuals, while maintaining a sense of humility for those she leads by caring for them as people.

Leadership

At the helm of the School, Boland currently leads 105 faculty and staff, 414 students, countless alumni, and several transformative initiatives, such as the Hawaii State Center for Nursing and the Hawaii Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn program. She has worked to ensure the advancement of school strategic plans that promote the UH commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural values by developing a spirit of faculty collaboration, building a professional staff, and engaging with employers, alumni, and community organizations. With the support of the IKE AŌ PONO program and faculty, the school has expanded the enrollment and graduation of Native Hawaiian students and those from indigenous and underrepresented populations. These alumni have moved on to provide culturally responsive care to the diverse Hawaii population, completed doctoral degrees, and joined the School as faculty members.



Boland's belief in the power of nurses and nursing is one of

her greatest assets. Stephanie Marshall, MS, RN, FAAN, (COL Ret US Army) grew to know Boland during her time as the director of community partnerships at NAWSON. Soon after arriving at the School, Boland created this position as a clear signal to the health care community and state that the School would be accessible, engaged, and collaborative.

“She really looked at the entire community, private, public, federal, and state partnerships,” says Marshall. “It was never just about the School of Nursing, but it was about how we can come together with various aspects of the state.”

The Hawaii State Center for Nursing, which serves as a collaborative partner in developing a quality health care workforce for Hawaii, has grown with Boland’s support. The Center surveys provide the workforce supply and demand data and educational capacity needed for sound policy development. With Boland’s leadership, the Center brought about legislative change to ensure safe, quality patient care that includes a continuing competency program for nurses, full-scope-of-practice authority for advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and a statewide tax credit for clinician volunteers (preceptors) that educate primary care nursing, medicine, and pharmacy students.

Originally set to retire in mid-2020, Boland quickly recognized that her assistance was needed during the COVID-19 pandemic. She postponed her retirement at UH to provide consistent leadership and support for the School and university to traverse these new waters.

“We cannot thank Mary enough. She delayed her retirement by a year when the pandemic struck,” said UH Manoa provost Michael Bruno. “She has been indispensable to the state and UH System in planning the COVID-19 response.”



Boland's contributions have led to success and increasing prominence locally and nationally for the School, but just as important to her is the improved quality of health and health care services for individuals in the community.

"Dean Boland has made a positive and lasting impact on the provision of health care services in Hawaii," says State Senator Rosalyn Baker, who grew to know Boland through her work on policy at the Legislature. "I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with her and learn from her."

This sentiment is one that others echo as well. Not only does Boland strive for excellence in the ventures she undertakes, but she also emanates that passion in such a way that those around her rise up to the challenge.

Excellence

Boland leaves a legacy that has set the school up for

continued success in the years to come. During her tenure, the school has added new endowments to support distinguished professorships, including the HMSA Distinguished Professorship in Interprofessional Education.



Under her guidance, the Nursing Alumni Association created an endowed scholarship fund to support students.

“I am so proud of our alumni who stepped up to build a vibrant alumni association that continues the school tradition of leadership, mentoring, and supporting the next generation of nurses in Hawaii,” says Dean Boland.



She helped to establish multiple student scholarships and endowments including but not limited to the Damsker, Helene Fuld Health Trust, and the Dr. & Mrs. Lawrence K.W. (BoHing Chan) Tseu Endowed Scholarship in Nursing.

Over 16 years, she led three nursing and two dental hygiene successful national accreditations, expanded research and partnerships, and improved access to education and care. She supported the development of the expanded function dental hygienist certificate program to address oral health needs of young children.

“She made sure that nursing was at the table [in legislature and in practice]. She commanded respect from the community, the health care field and the health care systems in the state,” Marshall says. “Yet, she is also very personable and articulate about what she believes in.”

Boland has grown a reputation for her abilities in cultivating a passionate, driven team that strives for excellence, but also for getting in the trenches right along with them. Boland is known for her focus on the goal – student success and improved health care delivery.

Innovation

A visionary, Boland recognizes needs and then works to fill them. Early in her time as dean, she introduced the Graduate Entry to Nursing Program (GEPN) followed by the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. Since launching, these programs rose to and maintain national rankings and continue to attract students from all over the world.

Perhaps one of the most visual products of her innovation is the funding, construction, and operation of the nationally accredited UH Translational Health Sciences Simulation Center (THSSC). This Center serves as a shared community resource that educates teams of students across all the health

disciplines. It provides a safe space for organizations to simulate updates to their procedures to improve patient safety.

“Lorrie Wong [Director of THSSC and HMSA Distinguished Professor], Dean Boland and I sat down and talked about the vision for the simulation center, and we thought big. What was so amazing was that within a year of that meeting, we had gotten donors and had the facility plan in hand. Within a couple of years, THSSC opened on-time and under budget,” Marshall says. “We saw it not just for the School, but also for the community: international, national and interprofessional access.”



Another major accomplishment is the Hawaii Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn program (HK), a partnership between UH Manoa and the Hawaii Department of Education. In 2014, the program was born out of a DOE goal to improve academic success for

keiki in the public schools through addressing unmet health needs in the school setting. Rather than using a school as a location to provide health services, HK nurse practitioners (APRN) and nurses (RN) are embedded in schools statewide working with students, teachers, and parents to address the needs they identify in their school. There is no one cookie-cutter approach applied to all schools, rather, each HK program site addresses needs specific to the school and its community.

“Her passion is school-based health care. She was the driving force to establish Hawaii Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn,” says Baker. “That program has made such a difference for the schools across the state.”

Since its inception seven years ago, HK has expanded to support schools on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii Island. In 2020, the program evolved to address pandemic needs by establishing a COVID-19 health hotline and telehealth services provided free to the schools.

“She has created tremendous opportunities for students at undergraduate and graduate levels. That was always near and dear to her heart, giving students as enriching experiences as they could get,” Marshall says, adding that she was able to accomplish these achievements through partnering with others. “It was always about partnerships. No person is an island. Her mantra was that we have to all work together and build those blocks for health care.”