



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 7, 2015

**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SCHOOL OF OCEAN AND EARTH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(SOEST) NAMED 'ELELE ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR  
BY MEET HAWAII**

\*\*Link to video and sound (details below): <http://bit.ly/1Nfb3vf>

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), Meet Hawai'i and the state's tourism industry leaders celebrated the University of Hawai'i School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST) as the 'Elele Organization of the Year for its outstanding work in helping to bring more than \$100 million in convention business to the state.

SOEST's Dean Brian Taylor accepted the award on behalf of the university system on Dec. 7 at Hawai'i Convention Center. It is the second award from HTA/Meet Hawai'i given to an entire organization.

"The University of Hawai'i School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology has played an integral role in securing convention business for the state," said Randy Baldemor, Chief Operating Officer for the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. "The international and national relationships of our 'Elele ambassadors are important for maintaining and expanding our repertoire of business. We greatly appreciate their efforts and look forward to continued partnership in the coming years."

Since the opening of the Hawai'i Convention Center in 1998, UH's 'Elele (ambassadors) have helped bring a half-billion dollars worth of convention business to Hawai'i. Specifically, since 2002 SOEST has generated a total of \$57.75 million YTD with repeat bookings for the Ocean Sciences Meeting and the Ocean Research Conference. Additionally, SOEST has assisted Meet Hawai'i in securing definite future conventions with estimated economic impact of \$38.5 million. Future conventions with SOEST affiliation include the International Coral Reef Symposium and Acoustical Society of America and Acoustical Society of Japan in 2016, the Ocean Sciences Meeting and Geological Society of America – Cordilleran Section in 2017 and the Asia Oceania Geosciences Society in 2018. Finally, SOEST also has generated an estimated \$37.3 million in tentative future bookings.

"It is an honor to receive this award from Meet Hawai'i. In our fields of study, Hawai'i provides rich experiences and priceless research opportunities found nowhere else in the world," said Taylor. "We are grateful for this partnership and feel privileged to serve as hosts for such an amazing destination."

The following individuals and organizations were also recognized for their notable contributions to securing convention business for the state:

- Dr. Greg Moore – UH School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
- Dr. Magdy Iskander – UH College of Engineering

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- Dr. Jeff Akaka and the Hawai'i Medical Association

Through the HTA 'Elele program, Meet Hawai'i partners with community leaders who have ties to national and international organizations in pursuit of mutually beneficial meetings for the Hawai'i Convention Center and the Hawaiian Islands.

Using their lifetime of professional relationships, the 'Elele have worked in cooperation with the tourism industry to attract dozens of important meetings and conventions to the state, including the Lion's Club International, International Astronomical Union and IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society.

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**About Meet Hawai'i**

Meet Hawai'i is a collaboration of the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) and Hawai'i Convention Center (HCC) to reinforce the brand of the Hawaiian Islands as a world-class destination for business meetings, conventions, and incentive programs. The marketing efforts of the Meet Hawai'i team are overseen by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), the state of Hawai'i's tourism agency. HTA was established in 1998 to ensure a successful visitor industry well into the future. Its mission is to strategically manage Hawai'i tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with the state of Hawai'i's economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires, and visitor industry needs. For information about Meet Hawai'i and the hosting of meetings, conventions and incentives, please visit [MeetHawaii.com](http://MeetHawaii.com).

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**Soundbites:**

Randy Baldemor, Chief Operating Officer, Hawaii Tourism Authority (:12)

"This is the type of collaboration I think that really ends up being a positive, not just for the organizations but for the community at large and so we're really appreciative to UH for their partnership with us and the 'Elele program."

Brian Taylor, Dean, SOEST, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (:18)

"Because this is such a natural meeting place for these societies and meetings, it leverages our people meeting east and west with others coming here. And so it's great for the economy, it's great for the intellectual progress and the research of our own university."

**B-Roll:**

0:00 – 0:50, 9 video clips, 'Elele event, starting with award to SOEST

0:51 – 1:25, 4 video clips: SOEST open house event