

GERALD DE MELLO

Gerald De Mello was born and raised in Hilo as a fourth generation Hilo resident from a family that now spans six generations in Hilo and Hamakua. A graduate of Hilo High School, he holds a B.A. in Education from Eastern Washington State University and an M.A. in Sociology from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Over 14 years, Gerald taught at Hawai'i Community College and University of Hawai'i at Hilo. He was appointed as Governor John Waihe'e's Administrative Liaison Officer and was part of the team that helped displaced workers find educational options or new employment to stabilize families after the closure of the sugar plantations. For Gerald, this type of uplifting community work was something he sought out throughout his career. In 1991, Gerald became UH Hilo's Director of University Relations and External Affairs, a post he held for 21 years under five different chancellors. Working in collaboration with Chancellor Rose Tseng for 12 years, the Hawai'i State Legislature, and the community, Gerald is credited as the lead at the legislature with bringing together vital UH Hilo projects, including the University Classroom Building, Marine Science Building, Student Life Center, Student Services Center, Science and Technology Building, and Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College Hawaiian Language Building, among others.

Gerald worked collaboratively with many others on major team projects including the building of the North Hawai'i Education and Research Center in Honoka'a (now the Kō Education Center), the initial proposed vision for the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center, the transfer of the U.S. Army Reserve Center on Lanikaula Street to UH Hilo, the donation of the Bank of Hawai'i building in downtown Hilo to UH Hilo, and securing funding for the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy building at UH Hilo. His community service includes being a member of the Hawai'i State Board of Land and Natural Resources, Hawai'i Historic Places Review Board, Lyman Museum board of trustees, Hawai'i Tourism Authority board of directors, and task forces to select sites for Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i campus in Kea'au, UH Hilo Science and Technology Park, and Hawai'i Island Portuguese Chamber of Commerce Cultural and Educational Center. He says that, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do much." Gerald credits his high school sweetheart and wife, Claudette, with support and encouragement given over the years because "without her being supportive," he says, "I would not be able to do the long hours and long days of work; in short, I would not be able to go out the door."