Finding Creative Ways to Connect

Hawai‘i Community College – Pālamanui helped serve the educational needs of the West Hawai‘i community this past summer and connected local middle and high school students to the college with several unique projects. If we are to succeed and fulfill our mission as a campus, it’s important to create genuine connections – which is all the more difficult during the pandemic, but more important than ever! Mahalo to our participants, parents, partners, faculty and staff for creating these opportunities. See more details about these terrific projects below. — Raynette “Kalei” Haleamau-Kam, Interim Director of Hawai‘i Community College – Pālamanui

Kupuola Summer STEM Camp (above left) and Early College Hawaiian Studies students from a partnership with Aloha MAP (above right).

Kupuola STEM Camp
Forensic science, native plants and space science were the focus of the Kupuola STEM Camp for 21 middle and high school students at the Pālamanui campus in July.

The camp taught science in ways that connect it to the real world. For example, when studying forensic science, students solved “crimes” using science.

“We had a ransom note so they did handwriting analysis and a pen ink analysis, so that’s a little bit more chemistry, and analyzed the ink using chemistry to decide which pen was used to write the ransom note,” said Luria Namba, a science instructor at Hawai‘i CC – Pālamanui.

Other days were focused on Hawaiian plants and space science. Representatives from Keck Observatory and the Canada France Hawaii telescope shared how astronomers use color to determine the elements on planets, and students made their own spectrosopes.

“I think it’s more interesting for them because they see how science is used in day-to-day life and that it’s not just something you learn at school,” said Namba.

IS 101 With Konawaena
A cohort of Konawaena students transitioning from 8th to 9th grade, got a jump start not only on high school, but also on college. The 21 students enrolled in the Hawai‘i CC course “Interdisciplinary Studies 101: Building Bridges to Self/Community,” which teaches skills to help students succeed in college. Students earned both high school and college credit for the summer course.

Travis Nakayama, a College and Career Counselor at Konawaena, said it was an eye-opener for students and will continue to have positive effects.

“A lot of the kids are realizing that, ‘Hey, college is within reach, so what other options can I pursue to maximize my educational experience at Konawaena High School?’” Nakayama said.

Nakayama said the course really prepared students for high school as well as college, which is important because it’s one thing to get into college and another to succeed there.

“This college course really forced those dispositions out of those kids,” Nakayama said.

“They had a no late work policy, they expected quality writing, they expected compulsory attendance. The instructors, Pearla Ha‘ailio and Ian Hirakawa, made those kids earn their grade.”

Aloha MAP Partnership
In partnership with Aloha MAP (Meritorious Achievement Program), Hawai‘i CC – Pālamanui delivered two Hawaiian Studies courses to 29 local high school students. The students earned seven college credits, in addition to high school credits, as they took Hawaiian language and culture courses from Hawai‘i CC faculty Kristen Dirks and Ryan McCormack in the summer.

Aloha MAP provided “wrap-around” support services to the students and their families to ensure the students were positioned to succeed.

“What made it a huge success, I believe, is that probably all the students were students who would not have typically done an early college course,” said Lilinoi Grace, Aloha MAP Program Director. “They were all Native Hawaiian, and the majority are first generation college going students.”

The end of the six-week accelerated courses concluded with a kīhei ceremony at the Kahikolu Church, where students presented their genealogy in Hawaiian.

“It was a really special thing for their families to witness,” said Grace.

“I’m going to school now, because I want to do more in my career.” — Jeremy Gambing wants more opportunities for advancement in his hospitality industry career. That’s why he earned his associate degree at Hawai‘i Community College – Pālamanui in Kona and is now earning his bachelor’s degree online from UH West O‘ahu with local support from the University Center, West Hawai‘i.

Discover the degree pathways available to you at a virtual workshop.

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