

# An Upward Bound Success Story

By: David Brooks, Waiakea High School 1999 graduate

David Brooks knows a little something about overcoming challenges.

This Upward Bound alum is the eighth child in a family of 23 brothers and sisters. As a youngster, David watched as his older siblings struggled, got into trouble, and dropped out of school. When it was his turn, he chose a different path.

David became the first person in his family to graduate from high school when he received his diploma from Waiakea High in 1999. Now, four years later, he is his family's first college graduate, with a degree in social work from Hawaii Pacific University.

He gives a lot of credit to UH Hilo's Upward Bound program for his achievements.

"The program helps us to believe we can do it," says David. One UB experience that stands out in his mind occurred on a trip to Maui.

Every year, UB seniors travel to Maui for one weekend to participate in leadership activities. For eight years now, one of those activities has been a ropes course. The ropes course consists of a couple of old telephone poles with a trapeze hanging in between them. Students are strapped into a harness with a rope attached to the cable above and the other end held by their peers below.

You've got to overcome a fear of heights, says David. He described climbing to the top of the wobbling pole, and swinging out onto the trapeze, while his UB teammates shouted encouragement from down below.

"We're all doing it together, cheering each other on," David says. "The ropes course is like a metaphor of the Upward Bound experience. There are challenges and obstacles you have to overcome. When you're done there's this sense of achievement."

When he went to college, says David, it was a "step of faith." He left his home in Hilo to attend Hawaii Pacific University on Oahu. His summer dorm experience with Upward Bound had taught him about being on his own and making friends. The program had also taught him the basic college survival skills of budgeting, time management, and how to take tests, he says.

"Going away for school I would recommend to anyone," says David. "Experience what life is like outside of your backyard."

David's advice for the college-bound would be to get involved on campus by joining sports, clubs and interest groups. Participating in activities outside of classes helps you get a "more well-rounded experience," he says, such as developing friendships, taking healthy risks and gaining new experiences. It also helps students build a support group for dealing with homesickness and stress, he says.

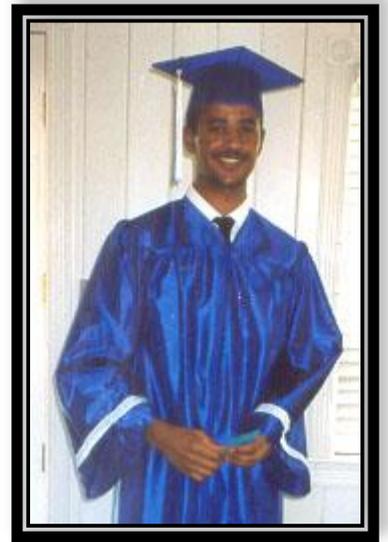
David became president of HPU's Christian Fellowship as a freshman. He earned a scholarship for his involvement with the Spirit Club, in addition to working the entire four years he was in school. He also made time to try skydiving.

"I think college was the best four years of my life – being out on my own and that sense of risk," says David. "I loved it."

Today, he hopes to use his education to give something back. His goal is to be a youth pastor.

"Someone took the time to make a difference in my life," says David, "and I can take the time to do the same for someone else."

Three of his sisters are now in college. Perhaps he already has.



*David Brooks  
Class of 1999 & 2003*