

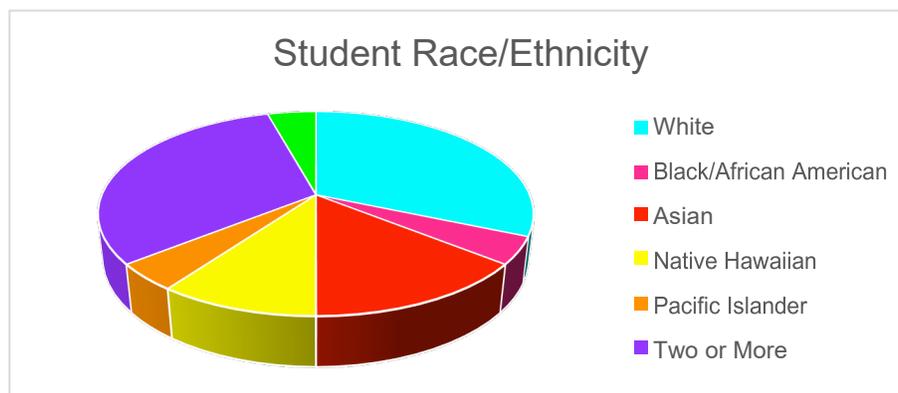
## Online Diversity Survey Results

UH Hilo developed our first diversity assessment survey and distributed it across the student body in AY 2019-2020. The goal was to capture, quantitatively, measures related to student evaluation of their experiences in and out of the classroom as pertain to diversity, but more specifically, the four areas identified in the rubric described above: *sense of place*, *sense of humanity*, *sense of others* and *sense of self*. Each area will be discussed below.

The survey was distributed March 01, 2020 and was left open for one month. A total of 70 students responded to the survey. When we initially distributed the survey, we were not aware of the toll the COVID-19 pandemic would take, but we do, in part attribute the lower than desired response rate to be, at least, in part, attributed to the confusion and changing priorities that occurred during that time period. However, to keep moving forward, we decided to simply report the results as we received them. The response from participants is summarized below.

### Demographics:

Of the 70 students who responded to our survey, 54 identified as female, 15 as male and 1 as gender non-binary/queer. The majority of respondents fell into the “typical” age of undergraduate students, with 60% (n=42) falling between 17 and 22 years. The age of respondents ranged, however, as high as 83, with the most respondents in their 20s, but including at least two respondents in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s respectively. More than 15% identified as having a disability (n=11). Race/ethnicity reporting indicates a mix of responses. White students represent almost a third of the student respondents (n=22). An equal number of respondents indicate they identify as racially/ethnically diverse, checking more than one race/ethnicity (n=22); among students selecting more than one race/ethnicity, 7 included Native Hawaiian as one of their identities. Asian students make up the third largest group of respondents (n=10), while 7 Native Hawaiian students, 3 African-American/Black students, 3 Pacific Islander students and 3 Hispanic/Latino/a/x students make up the remainder. Students from every college were represented, including the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy. Representation is split almost evenly among students by the standard year based on credit hours achieved (e.g. 0-30 credits, first year).



### **Diversity Experience and Awareness of Hawai‘i Prior to Attending UH Hilo**

Among respondents (n=70), 25 agree they are “from Hawai‘i Island,” while another 41 have lived on or visited Hawai‘i Island prior to attending UH Hilo. This means only four respondents had no experience on or with Hawai‘i Island before they became students at UH Hilo, which may be a contributing factor to a robust student response denoting their understanding of Hawai‘i’s uniqueness as a state.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that, prior to coming to UH Hilo, they were somewhat, moderately, or completely **aware of Hawai‘i’s uniqueness** as a state (n=64), its history of immigration and immigrant descendants (n=61), the history of being an independent kingdom prior to annexation (n=59), and as a geographical and environmentally unique biosphere (n=63). More than half of respondents in each of these areas indicated moderate or complete awareness prior to coming to UH Hilo. Of those students who indicated no awareness, in every category, all but one student selected “Mainland US” or “Outside the US” as the location they were raised. The one student who reported growing up on the Big Island shared that they had no awareness of the environmental uniqueness but did not indicate lack of awareness in any other area. Thus, it appears that student respondents by and large came to UH Hilo with at least some foundational awareness of what makes Hawai‘i unique in terms of place, particularly if they had grown up, lived on, or even simply visited Hawai‘i Island at some point in their lives prior to becoming a student. This is encouraging in the sense that students are generally aware that the experiences they gain at UH Hilo may be very different from those they experience elsewhere as a result of Hawai‘i’s uniqueness as a state.

At the same time, there is also a clear opportunity to connect with students who have no pre-existing experience or even knowledge about Hawai‘i Island. For this subset of students, it is imperative the University connect with them and provide the opportunity to learn. A deeper analysis of student engagement and retention could better inform the University of opportunities to create connections, particularly with students who have no prior connection the Island, to determine if there is a connection between their lack of existing knowledge and their tenure at UH Hilo. For example, more information could be provided to prospective students, even at a high level, in our marketing and recruitment materials to better prepare applicants and give them resources that provide a base level of understanding. Perhaps suggested reading lists could be provided to newly enrolled students, or even to all students, over summer and winter breaks.

UH Hilo is also unique in the diversity of our student body, being recognized multiple years as the most diverse campus in the United States by a variety of sources. Still, more than 10% of students reported that they did not have a history of seeking opportunities to learn about differences prior to enrolling in one of the most diverse campuses in the United States. Another 13% did not feel a sense of pride in their own identity and almost 20% did not feel comfortable being their true self in most settings. This data tells us that we have an opportunity to aid students in learning about themselves and others. Attendance at a diverse campus does not mean that one simply becomes aware of issues, or that a student will instantly become comfortable in their own skin as they engage with others who are different.

Coursework and co-curricular activities present an opportunity to learn and apply a critical lens to safely and critically examine difference, while simultaneously increasing awareness of self and how one's own identity can impact the individual and broader society. Of particular concern is the response rate for students who came to UH Hilo not feeling comfortable with who they are in most settings. This also creates opportunities beyond the curriculum, moving into the student affairs arena to provide resources, services, and student groups in order to support each student in embracing their authentic self.

## **Diversity Experience and Classroom Education While Enrolled at UH Hilo**

### ***Diversity and Learning: Sense of Humanity (Respect) Kākou, Sense of Others (Empathy) 'Oukou/Lākou, Sense of Self (Humility) Au/Mākou***

Considering the aforementioned findings and the expectation that courses should be one means to educate, raise awareness, and encourage critical analysis internal and external to self, we queried students regarding the courses they have taken and their contribution to learning about issues of diversity. We wanted to know whether or not students are learning concepts related to *Sense of Humanity (Respect) Kākou, Sense of Others (Empathy) 'Oukou/Lākou, Sense of Self (Humility) Au/Mākou*, and if so, whether in their general courses, electives, or courses in their major. Responses indicate there are elements that have taken the back burner and have largely been excluded from the curriculum, while others have had a profoundly positive impact.

Students respond affirmatively that they obtain this content within the classroom, and in all types of courses. But, while many students indicated more than one type of course aided them on this journey, courses within their major lead as the class type where students gain their diversity training in the classroom. Additionally, it is important to note that there are numerous instances (as will be elaborated upon below) when students note a higher frequency of learning diversity concepts outside the classroom. Of concern is the fact that in a total of ten questions (out of 36), "none" was the most frequently occurring response, indicating that these students did not believe they were receiving this information in or out of the classroom.

The responses clearly indicate a need to emphasize the institutionally established "diversity rubric" and proactively train faculty in its implementation. The number of students who report that they have not taken any courses or engaged in any co-curricular activities for each area ranges from 10 to 39. Furthermore, no more than four students, in response to any question related to courses and the four diversity areas, Humanity, Empathy, Others and Self, responded that they have learned about these issues in all types of classes. This means that some topics are simply not being discussed at all in any number of classes, regardless of type, and certain groups are particularly less likely to be considered in an academic context. For example, more than a third (27/70) of respondents stated they did not learn about another religion, almost half (33/70) did not learn about LGBTQ issues, more than half failed to learn about gender and gender identity, and even more students (39/70) report that they did not learn about people with disabilities.

The marked deficiencies noted above provide great opportunity for improvement in the

classroom and an even greater opportunity for UH Hilo administration to look further into campus culture and assess if these misses in the classroom play out in other ways as pertain to inclusion; while UH Hilo has been recognized as culturally diverse, discussions of diversity outside race/ethnicity must also be encouraged and portrayed as essential to a healthy, inclusive, safe campus community.

### **Diversity Experience and Co-Curricular Activities While Enrolled at UH Hilo**

Co-curricular activities also provide an important role in educating, raising awareness, and enhancing students' opportunities to learn, communicate, and increase their sense of community at the local and global levels. Students responded that co-curricular activities contribute to their education in every area. Student respondents indicated that co-curricular activities yield more positive responses than any type of course in a) building a sense of community by helping them better interact with people they know and don't know, b) examining race relations in the US and in Hawaii, c) providing an opportunity to share backgrounds and examine their own history and how that impacts their experiences as well as others, d) feeling more comfortable with people who differ physically, e) relate to people who are different, and f) simply engaging with diversity outside the classroom.

This speaks to the need to continue to support co-curricular programming as an essential role in the lives and learning of students. Given that areas that are not being addressed in the classroom (i.e. LGBTQ, disability) as discussed previously, co-curriculars are providing a space for students to learn. In the prior examples, exposure to these issues was received more frequently in co-curriculars than in any course type. In fact, learning about gender and gender identity was reported as largely not occurring in the classroom at all (n=37), but it is taking place in co-curriculars more frequently than in any course type (n=17). Thus it is imperative, particularly as we look to increased budget challenges, that we do not consider co-curricular programming as add-ons or luxuries that can be sacrificed or that do not contribute to learning. The results of student feedback show that activities such as those provided through Student Affairs programming and the Athletics Department very directly contribute to student learning and their ability to consider themselves within the context of their own histories as well as those of others with whom they interact, locally and globally. Students indicate that, more than any course type, co-curriculars increase their ability to be better community members and global citizens. The value of co-curriculars cannot be emphasized enough.

### **UH Hilo as Safe, Inclusive, Diverse Space**

Overall, UH Hilo student respondents believe their institution to be a safe, inclusive place for people from all walks of life to live and learn (n=60). They also agree that their overall experience at UH Hilo helped them grow as a person (n=62). However, it is also important to note that a full 20% feel that neither their overall experience, fellow students, nor their faculty helped them feel more comfortable engaging in conversations with people who are different from them.

Student narrative responses by and large reflect a positive experience as well. Many students report that their most meaningful experiences on campus have been their interactions with other

students. They state that the mere fact of the diversity of the student body allows them to learn naturally by engaging in conversations, attending class, living and engaging in outside activities with students whose experiences are different from their own has opened up a wealth of opportunity to learn about diversity. As one student stated, “Every day at UH Hilo, students treat each other respectfully regardless of their background and embrace each other’s diversity. We are truly blessed to live in a place where all viewpoints, both progressive and conservative are tolerated.” Another student summarized this feeling somewhat differently, stating, “Here in Hilo, it’s so diverse that you don’t have to hide anything about your identity and that has been meaningful,” while another added, “Hearing stories of classmates around the world that add to what we’re learning in the classroom” to emphasize the impact of peers as supplemental to the classroom experience.

Also noted numerous times are the co-curricular activities, specifically highlighting events such as International Nights, the Black History Month events, and training or other programming supported by the EEO/AA/Title IX Office (e.g. healthy relationships, prevention education, non-discrimination) as particularly eye opening and educational. International nights was described by one respondent as “a very meaningful experience as it shared different cultural dances, chants and songs of people of various ethnicities.”

In terms of opportunities, UH Hilo should strategically invest in programming to support a sense of inclusion that doesn’t necessarily come through simply bringing diverse people together. Our student body’s diversity is an asset that we are fortunate to have, despite not intentionally seeking it. What we do with that diversity is a conscious effort we will have to make. Some students do not feel included, as evidenced by their comments that state “People are still racist to each other. People tend to stick to their own cultural groups,” which directly contrasts with “the diversity is beautiful on campus; all walks of life,” or that “the diversity of the campus has allowed me to make friends with people from not only all over the country, but all over the world.”

A reliance on the students to teach and learn to and from each other is a lost opportunity to examine critical relations locally, nationally and globally. Although there is a great deal of value in peer to peer learning, there is also value to learning diversity in the classroom so as to drive innovation and increase opportunities for our students as they venture off campus and into the world beyond academia.

## **Conclusion**

UH Hilo has a great number of strengths in terms of diversity. The student body, their willingness to work together and learn from each other, their sense of open-mindedness and desire to contribute to their community and their recognition of the unique space in which they live and learn are among a few. We also have a number of opportunities in front of us as we honestly and openly assess our academics and programming. There is an opportunity to seek collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs, given the high value placed on co-curriculars as well as what appears to be a deficiency of diversity learning in the classroom. Additionally, those things identified by students as valuable—International Nights, Black History Month, safe spaces for students to come together, programming that provides an

opportunity for students and employees to embrace their genuine selves--should be institutionalized. These efforts could be guaranteed (to the extent possible) and funded consistently to show a commitment to the work that is being done and a belief in the positive outcomes for students. UH Hilo is currently working strategically to increase our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts to ensure we do not take this strength for granted. We are re-envisioning campus-wide committees and dedicating space and resources, including funding. These efforts are being driven by the Office of Equal Opportunity to reduce duplication of effort, coordinate services, connect the dots between diversity, equity and inclusion, serve as a safe space, and become a clearinghouse for resources and information to serve the entire campus community.

All in all, while students bring so much to the University, they come to the UH Hilo to learn. Treating issues of diversity, equity and inclusion as core to their overall learning plan will serve to create life-long learners of our employees who will in turn inspire and educate students whose current and future decisions apply their learning to creating a more just and equitable society.

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