

As part of the Assessment Support Committee's efforts at developing program assessment on campus, two members of the committee met with faculty in Communication and Kinesiology to discuss a key question posed by WSCUC: "Which programs are particularly effective in retaining and graduating their majors? What can be learned from them? What is the students' experience like? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)." This smaller group in Spring of 2020 developed and deployed over 100 surveys in both majors to see what we could learn about two of our most popular and successful majors.

The following are results of that survey.

### Communication

Sixty-one 61 surveys ( $n = 61$ ) were collected from COM 345, COM 441, and COM 475. Of the 61, 22 transferred from other majors, 20 were originally COMM majors; 19 were non majors—this indicates a large number of non-majors are taking upper division COMM classes. Because we issued this survey using an older version, choice of former majors was not indicated on about half of the surveys. But the ones that did indicate former majors showed a wide variety: Psychology (2), Math (2), Nursing (2), Marine Science (2), and Business (2).

Regarding choice of major, 30 people indicated "interest in the subject" and 21 indicated "grades/skills in the major" (19 of whom also picked "interest in subject"). Less important were "parent/guardian advice" (16), "potential salary earning" (12) and "working with the faculty" (8). The large level of interest corresponds to better engagement and thus better grades—an inverse relation between the two would have indicated otherwise.

Of those in the Communication Major, 27 indicated there were no problems in the major with on-time 4-year completion. Four (4) were not completing in four years, but within 5-6 years and stated this was perfectly acceptable since they were either able to explore other areas or were double majors. Three (3) indicated problems with course availability or GE credit transfer issues. Like some of the Kinesiology students, 3 others indicated that switching the major was what hampered them, and these students are worth quoting:

- A lot of Psychology classes were not available. Once I change my major to communication, it has been really nice. The majority of the instructors were clear on their rules, expectations, and instruction.
- I switched major because I thought the comm workload would be more forgiving than my previous major [not identified].
- Switching majors is definitely a setback. I've changed my major several times. Math—business admin & communication—Communication—Political Science and Communication. Also with switching majors, retaking previous classes that were failed or received poor grades are extremely difficult and almost pointless due to the major change.

While not seen in the Kinesiology batch, there were 5 KES students among the Communication surveys who reported personal problems as hampering timely completion:

- The only setback that I have faced have been self-imposed. I have struggled with procrastination the entire time but the faculty have been extremely encouraging.

- Although I should have graduated with my 4 year degree already, I struggled with the balance between personal issues, family issues, and school, but I never gave up or took any time off from school.
- None so far, managing work and balancing athletics are my only concerns,
- Yes I ended up taking a year off after my first year because I was not focused enough and [un]motivated. But now I am back and appreciate and understand how important my grades are.

### *Kinesiology*

Forty-three surveys ( $n = 43$ ) were collected in KES 202, 350, and 450. Of the 43, only 11 were non-majors. Of the 32 majors, 16 indicated no previous majors, 15 indicated a previous major, with the highest switching coming from Nursing (7) and Biology (4). Other former majors were: Business, AJ, Marine Science, Hawaiian Studies, and Health Promotion (1 each).

When asked about the choice of major by KES majors, 28 people indicated “interest in the subject”; 16 people indicated “parent/guardian” advice was a factor; “potential salary earnings” was chosen 17 times as well (10 by people who also indicated parent/guardian influence). At the bottom were “grades/skills in the major” (11) and “working with the faculty” (12). This suggests that contrary to popular belief, Kinesiology is a major that attracts students due to subject matter as opposed to being an “easy” major to get through. Interestingly, more students in KES indicated a real understanding of gainful employment as posed by this major.

When asked about problems with completion, the following was noted: 11 said there were no problems; seven (7) indicated poor advising or counseling; six (6) indicated problems with pacing and/or courses not being available; six (6) said they were in nursing and another in pre-pharmacy—these seven students changed to Kinesiology which is why they were not completing on time.

Some of the more notable responses:

- I’m graduating early even though I’ve switched my major (Marine Science to Kinesiology)
- I earned 2 Cs my first semester and will be re-taking both courses this summer. I also think my advisor put me in unnecessary classes for my major/path and it set me back.
- I have taken my time to complete my degree. Sometimes going part-time and diversifying my education with lots of electives. I am very happy with my pace.
- I’d say making certain courses in a specific semester have been an issue. Especially the core upper division we need to graduate. Also the fact that pre-nursing doesn’t get covered by FAFSA. I think counselors rush the students to taking too many hard classes in a single semester “to graduate on time” then you end up not passing is an issue too.

What we learned in this survey is that both [Communication](#) and [Kinesiology](#) are that they attract majors due to strong interest from the very beginning. Ironically, neither department has a strong indigenous/Hawaiian core, yet both are able to attract large numbers of majors. They are, however, very good at receiving students from other majors. To help better guide students, it would appear early advising when choosing a major may need to be more aggressive in targeting students, especially those aiming to be accepted into Nursing or Pharmacy who are repeating courses due to poor grade performance.