Giving our local high school students a boost to college

As we look to our work in 2017, a high priority at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo is to improve significantly the recruiting, retention and graduation of our students. I’d like to share with you two programs showing great progress on recruiting and the success of our students: the Running Start and Early College programs.

Both programs are partnerships between UH and the State Department of Education. UH also has an Early College partnership with Kamehameha Schools.

Running Start

The Running Start program has been around for years. It allows local high school students to take a college course at one of the 10 UH System campuses across the State. In this way, high school students are attending classes with college and university students and getting acclimated to college life and demands. Students receive dual credit, high school and college credit, for successful completion of the course.

Prior to spring 2015, UH Hilo had a small number of students in Running Start. It was after we started offering Early College classes a couple of years ago that we began to see a significant increase in enrollment.

Early College

In the Early College program, university courses are taught by a university professor on the student’s high school campus. Upon successful completion of the course, the student receives both high school and college credit.

UH Hilo joins Blue Zones Project movement

by Ken Hupp

As an institution of higher learning, the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo is well-versed in cultivating the development of healthy minds. But UH Hilo may also become known for promoting overall physical well-being in the not-too-distant future -- a development that will no doubt help individuals make good on their New Year’s resolutions to live a healthier life.

The University has joined an effort to transform Hilo into a Blue Zones community. It’s an undertaking that requires worksites, schools, restaurants, grocery stores and even government to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to the environment, policy, and social networks. If UH Hilo’s efforts are successful, it will join Windward Community College as the only Blue Zones approved institutions in the 10-campus UH System.

The Blue Zones Project provides a framework for individuals to achieve the goal of living a healthier life by making changes to their home and workplace environment. The concept is modeled on the best practices of places where people not only live longer by reaching the age of 100 at an astonishing rate, but also enjoy a higher quality of life.

“We’ve looked at a number of places around the world like Sardinia, Italy, Okinawa, Japan, and Loma Linda, California and came up with some pretty amazing findings,” said Jana Ortiz-Misiaszek, organization lead, Blue Zones Project – Hawai‘i. “Residents of Okinawa, for example, enjoy the longest disability-free life expectancy, have 1/5 the rate of breast and/or colon cancer, and 1/6 the rate of cardiovascular disease.”

The reasons vary due to factors like geography that promote outdoor activities, lifestyle and diet. One common feature among all the sites studied was participation in a plant-based diet. Blue Zones has created a set of benchmarks to determine what a healthy workplace looks like. Ortiz-Misiaszek says the time and effort required to reshape the workplace environment is well-worth the benefits provided.

“Employees with higher well-being cost less and perform better,”
Blue Zones
Continued from page 1

Ortiz-Misiaszek said. “You can see it in lower healthcare costs through health-risk reduction, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism, which creates a competitive advantage.”

Project-approved status is earned by getting at least 25 percent of the employees to sign the Blue Zones Personal Pledge, and committing to implement various actions from six foundational pillars of worksite well-being which carry various point values. At least one pledge action must come from each of the categories, which includes Leadership, Purpose, Habitat/Physical Environment, Engagement/Creation of Social Networks, Policies & Benefits and Well-Being Solutions. Actions can range from allowing flexible work schedules for all employees to offering employer-sanctioned fitness activities to hosting plant-based cooking classes.

A campus committee formed by Kalei Rapoza, director, Office of Human Resources, is reviewing the Blue Zones Project Worksite Pledge to identify what best practices the University already has and which new ones to pursue. Rapoza believes the committee has a lot to work with.

“We have many segments of this campus doing important things that would qualify toward Blue Zones Project Worksite Pledge approval, such as walking groups, healthy eating demonstrations and the State-sponsored Employee Assistance Program,” Rapoza said. “I’d like to specifically point out the Get Out and Move It! campaign that was started, on their own initiative, by a core group of employees over the summer. And let’s not forget ‘Local First’ dining, which Sodexo has been offering for some time now.”

Among the units that have been or are working directly with Blue Zones is the Edwin H. Mookini Library, which is seeking its own Blue Zones worksite approval. Staffers have organized five different moais or small social groups who meet regularly to take part in Zumba, Walking, Cooking Healthy, Eating Healthy and a Happy Hour. The activities enjoy a 67 percent participation rate from staff.

“This program works wonders with staff morale,” said Michelle Sylvestor, Library office assistant, who added that her colleagues look forward to coming to work and enjoy participating in the different moais.

Another active campus group is Student Health and Wellness, which will hold its 3rd annual Health Fair on Wednesday, January 18 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on the Campus Center Plaza. A total of 15 organizations both on and off campus have been invited to take part in the event, including Lokahi Treatment Centers, Campus Recreation, Helping Hands Hawai’i, Hawai’i Island HIV/AIDS Foundation, and Bay Clinic. The participating organizations will provide information on various health and wellness resources in the community ranging from general health and well-being to specific topics including smoking cessation, HIV/ HCV, mental health, and drug misuse and abuse. Visit https://hilo.hawaii.edu/wellness/documents/SHWPHealthFair_2017.pdf for more information.

Meanwhile, an informal tally by Rapoza’s committee shows UH Hilo is already halfway to Blue Zones approval. They have also identified several other actions that would put them over the top. But identifying those actions is one thing; implementing them is another. Rapoza admits there will be challenges.

“The biggest challenge will be time. We will have to work together to find flexibility in work schedules to allow employees opportunities to pursue activities away from their desks and offices,” Rapoza said. “Another challenge will be invigorating the campus to get involved. Work schedules have a part in this, but we also have to look at constantly introducing new ideas and opportunities to sustain interest and participation. Neither of these challenges is insurmountable, and we can achieve our goals through a collective effort.”

Rapoza expects approval to be met by March. A Blue Zones Project Team member will be called in once the practices are implemented to validate the achievement. The committee will also need to collect metrics before and after adopting the best practices to measure the impact they have had on healthcare costs/claims, biometric screening results, absenteeism, productivity, turnover and other key performance indicators or health-related information.

“Blue Zones approval isn’t the finish line,” Rapoza said. “We’ll be continuing this effort well into the future.”

(Ken Hupp is a public information officer.)
The purpose is to have more high school students graduate with college credits so they are better prepared for their future degree and career.

This type of program works. I started college with credit for two high school courses. They were both required so I started by taking more advanced courses, and that let me to finish my undergraduate degree early.

I recommend high school students consider taking Early College courses not just to get a head start, but to understand they are ready for college-level work and that UH may be the next step for their education.

In 2015, 12 high schools Statewide were selected to participate in the Early College DOE program to increase the number of high school students earning six or more college credits before they graduate from high school. Four public high schools on Hawai‘i Island are participating. Kamehameha Schools also entered into a partnership with UH Hilo.

Some of the introductory classes provided by UH Hilo in the last two years are in astronomy, psychology, and sociology at Kohala High. Anthropology, art, communication, English, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and math are offered at the Kamehameha Schools Hawai‘i campus.

Hawai‘i Community College also has partnerships with high schools on the island and UH Hilo is working closely with them to bring the Early College program to the entire island.

Kohala High School is working with Hawai‘i CC and UH Hilo. Hilo High School, Kealakehe High and Waiakea High are working with Hawai‘i CC.

Collaboration for success
As we gear up for the next legislative session, it’s important to note that the DOE and the Governor have a goal of making funds available to the DOE to provide students Statewide with the opportunity to complete six college credits prior to their high school graduation. This will ensure we have close working relationships with the high schools while the students take one college class per semester in their senior year or one college class per year in each of their junior and senior years.

All regular admissions criteria to UH still apply, so incoming students participating in Running Start and Early College still need to meet minimum grade point average requirements for acceptance into a UH school. But the programs greatly help with exactly that preparation and transition into college life, giving students a jump start and making it easier for them to acclimate to college life and be successful right through to graduation.

For more information about our Running Start and Early College programs, contact Zach Street or Stacie Higgins.

Here’s wishing you a Happy New Year!

Aloha,

Donald C. Shaner


Faith Mishina, Associate Professor, Spanish, had her book, Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s Subversive Agenda: Architectures of Deception to Discredit the Non-Ending Colonial Status Quo, published with Common Ground Publishing, December 2016. She also had her journal article, “The ‘Free Trade’ Agreements and Commissions that Led to the ‘Rigged’ Economic and Political Game in Latin America: Neocolonial Control, Porous Sovereignty, and Reduced Democracy,” published in the International Journal of Civic, Political, and Community Studies, 14(4) 2016, 17-32.

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Program Spotlight

Adopt-a-Beehive with Alan Wong update

(Program Spotlight is a presentation of Ka Lono Hanakahi that highlights and follows a UH Hilo program throughout the entire academic year. The program for 2016-2017 is The Adopt-a-Beehive with Alan Wong program.)

An adopter appreciation event was held on November 13th at the Ala Moana Shopping Center’s special events room where Chef Alan Wong and Dr. Lorna Tsutsumi from UH Hilo’s College of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource Management thanked the adopters for their financial support that benefits student education at UH Hilo, promotes public outreach and increases general awareness about honey bees along with the important role they play. Participants were treated to unique food items Chef Alan created using products from the UH Hilo hives, including truffled honey, moringa honey, propolis oils, fresh pollen, and a special cocktail inspired by “mead,” a honey drink.

The program recently received a $25,000 endowment to provide beekeeping students scholarships from Vince and Alison Shigekuni in honor of Alison’s parents, Ben and Fusae Fujise. During a November 25 visit to the UH Hilo Farm in Panaewa, Vince and Alison visited the hive they adopted for Alison’s parents, toured the apiaries with present beekeeping students, and planted an ohia tree to commemorate the occasion.

Above Right: Vince and Alison Shigekuni planting an ohia lehua tree in the UH Hilo bee park in Panaewa to acknowledge a $25,000 endowment in honor of Alison’s parents, Ben and Fusae Fujise.

Far Right: Britni Schock (Left) and Brandon Carvalho (right) receiving congratulations on successfully completing the requirements for a beekeeping certificate from Karen Hofstad on behalf of her fellow adopters.

Right: Karen Hofstad congratulating Michael Dowsett (center) and Zachary Solarte (right).

A special presentation also took place at the Farm on December 8 when students Michael Dowsett, Britni Schock, Zachary Solarte and Brandon Carvalho received recognition certificates for successfully completing the requirements for a beekeeping certificate. The certificates were presented by Karen Hofstad on behalf of her fellow adopters; Hofstad was visiting from Alaska at the time of the event.

Spicy Ahi Salad with Honey Vinegar Jelly and Hilo Hearts of Palm was one of the unique food items featured at a November adopter appreciation event.
Black Arm Band to perform “Dirtsong” at UH Hilo PAC

A musical presentation celebrating the past and revolutionizing the future of Indigenous Australia will take place when Black Arm Band performs “Dirtsong” at the UH Hilo Performing Arts Center on Friday, January 20, at 7:30 p.m.

Black Arm Band, a collective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI), is led by some of Australia’s foremost indigenous artists, including Emma Donovan, Fred Leone, Mark Atkins and Deline Briscoe, alongside Executive Producer Elizabeth Woollacott. Considered one of Australia’s leading performing arts companies, they have been widely acclaimed in Australia and internationally.

At the heart of their work is the group’s relationship with indigenous communities from which they draw inspiration. Their musical tradition and presentation is forged from over 40,000 years of living culture, infused with contemporary styles adopted as their own by Aboriginal Australia.

Tickets are reserved seating and priced at $30 General, $25 Discount and $15 UH Hilo/Hawai’i CC students (with a valid student ID) and children, up to age 17 pre-sale, or $35, $30 and $20 at the door.

Tickets are available by calling the UH Hilo Box Office at 932-7490 or ordering online at artscenter.uhh.hawaii.edu.

Circus comedy coming to UH Hilo Jan. 26

Virtuoso clown Jamie Adkins will bring his one-man circus comedy “Circus Incognitus” to the UH Hilo Performing Arts Center on Thursday, January 26, at 7:30 p.m.

In “Circus Incognitus,” Adkins wanders on stage to perform his new show, but struggles to build the scene around him using everyday objects. Things go awry with his props proving to be most unhelpful: his ladder disintegrates under his foot, he wrangles an animated chair, tussles with a pesky hat, negotiates a precarious slack wire, and juggles almost everything. Theatre goers even get involved in the endeavor by tossing lemons for him to catch on a fork, held between his teeth.

Tickets are reserved seating and priced at $20 General, $15 Discount and $10 UH Hilo/Hawai’i CC students (with a valid student ID) and children, up to age 17, pre-sale, or $25, $20 and $15 at the door.

Tickets are available by calling the UH Hilo Box Office at 932-7490 or ordering online at artscenter.uhh.hawaii.edu.
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      | Vulcan Men’s Basketball vs. Holy Names University, 7:30 p.m., Civic, Admission |
| 20   | **Black Arm Band: Dirtsong**, 7:30 p.m., PAC, Admission |
| 21   | Vulcan Women’s Basketball vs. Hawai‘i Pacific University, 1 p.m., Civic, Admission  
      | Vulcan Men’s Basketball vs. Hawai‘i Pacific University, 7:30 p.m., Civic, Admission |
| 26   | **Jamie Adkins: Circus Incognitus**, 7:30 p.m., PAC, Admission |