PLAN TO IMPROVE PERSISTENCE & RETENTION RATES
OF THE TARGET POPULATION

The Annual Performance Report submitted in January 2014 covered Year 2 of the project, from October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013. The following should be noted as evidence that demonstrates that the project is improving in its efforts to achieve the goals of increased persistence and retention of the target population.

• **Improved rates of students making satisfactory academic progress:** The rates of students in good academic standing and making satisfactory academic progress improved at the end of the Fall 2013 semester. At the end of the Spring 2013 semester, the rate was 65.8; however, the rate increased to 73.5% at the end of the Fall 2013 semester.

The following list describes the specific plans to improve the persistence and retention rate of the target population:

• **Implementation of a Retention Platform, which includes an Early Warning System:** The institution has purchased a software retention platform that empowers faculty and staff to positively impact student success and retention by identifying at-risk students early in the term. It efficiently and effectively provides faculty and staff with the information they need to identify and coordinate interventions with at-risk students. In addition, it coordinates efforts with other faculty/staff that have a relationship with their students through alerts and notes; helps faculty/staff prepare for student meetings in advance so time is spent helping students rather than diagnosing problems; and helps quantify efforts and outcomes. It also empowers students to gain insight into themselves through social-norming; recognize gaps between their behavior and their desired outcomes; understand the elements that impact their social and academic success; and encourages them to reach out and capitalize on campus resources that can help them address their problems. It is anticipated that this system will serve to increase student retention and success. The project will be participating in piloting the program this Spring 2014 semester (with campus-wide implementation scheduled for Fall 2014), and students in the target population will be included in the pilot project this spring.

• **Expanded Summer Bridge Program:** In Year 2, the program expanded the number of student participants in the project’s 10-day summer bridge project from 9 to 22 students. Of the 22 students who participated in the bridge program, 100% persisted at UH Hilo from the Fall 2013 to the Spring 2014
semester. The program was revised during Year 2 based on evaluation and feedback from Year 1’s program, (for example, a component devoted to reading was added, which was identified as an academic skill area that needed to be strengthened), and greater attention was paid to selecting students who demonstrated the greatest need for services. We are planning to increase the number of participants in Year 3.

- **Increase in Number of Tutors:** The project increased the number of tutors in Year 2 of the project, and is increasing the number even more during the current Year 3. A recent graduate is in the process of being hired to provide special academic support to students in the target population on a part-time basis. The project has implemented a “Tutors on Demand” service, in which a student can meet with a tutor with very little advance notice.

- **Offering a University 101 Class:** The project offered a section of University 101 (“Paths to Academic/Lifelong Success”) specifically for first-time freshmen from the target population in Fall 2013 and plans to continue offering the class in Fall 2014. The retention rate from Fall 2013 to Spring 2014 of students who enrolled in the University 101 class was 100%. In addition, a series of workshops on topics such as time management, preparing for finals, applying for financial aid and scholarships, and interviewing for jobs has been initiated.

- **Expanded Opportunities for Involvement in High Impact Activities:** The project is expanding the number of students who engage in “high impact” activities such as working on research projects, community service projects, and on-campus jobs to not only deepen their levels of engagement with the institution, the faculty, and their studies but also assist them with meeting their educational expenses. Research has shown that engagement in high impact activities positively impacts student retention and success. In addition, active student engagement was increased through student organizations’ participation in community education programming. Greater attention is being given to matching students’ academic and career interests/goals with the types of opportunities in which they engage.

- **Expanded Outreach Efforts:** The project is expanding personalized outreach by project staff to not only new freshmen, but to new transfer students as well. These outreach efforts also includes students not making satisfactory academic progress at the end of each semester. For those students, an assessment and action plan has been developed and is used to help students get back into good academic standing.

- **Stronger English Language Preparation:** The project and the institution have more closely assessed and placed students in the target population who are non-native speakers of English. Students who are determined to benefit from English as a Second Language classes are now taking those classes, which is strengthening levels of English proficiency and building a greater foundation for success as they progress toward upper-division courses.

- **Changes in Admissions & Financial Aid Processing:** The institution revised
its procedures such that students in the target population can receive accurate financial aid awards and appropriate tuition charges with no/fewer changes as soon as they submit proof of residency. Also, the Admissions Office and Financial Aid Office are now sharing documents so that a student does not have to submit the same document to two different offices at the institution. In addition, a checklist was created for applicants to that it is easier for them to understand and follow the procedures to get admitted to the University and arrange for housing and financial aid.

- **Awarding of APIASF Scholarships:** UH Hilo was selected to be one of several institutions across the nation to be part of an inaugural scholarship program: the APIASF AANAPISI Scholarship Program. Eighteen UH Hilo students were awarded $2,500 scholarships for the Spring 2014 semester. The AANAPISI Scholarship Program supports the Partnership for Equity in Education through Research (PEER) project, which was launched last year by APIASF along with the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) to help realize the full degree-earning potential of the AAPI student population. As part of UH Hilo’s participation, PEER is conducting research into success in college of AAPI students, assessing how this scholarship support impacts student success.

- **Applying Research:** The project has been engaged in extensive research on the target populations, conducting focus groups, administering surveys, and mining data from the institutional student information system. A researcher working as part of the grant project is currently assessing and evaluating the impact of services and programs for Pacific Islander students and assisting with determining the factors that facilitate the success of the Pacific Islander students. As evaluation and assessment data is produced and analyzed, programs and services aimed at the target population are being modified. For example, the Summer Bridge Program and high impact activities have evaluation components designed to inform and improve program implementation. Specific metrics are identified for indicators of program success. Research designed to examine cultural and contextual factors, as well as interpersonal characteristics such as social support, engagement, and self-efficacy are ongoing with systematic data collection occurring regularly. In addition, comparisons and cross-sectional studies of students in the target population have yielded preliminary findings such as rates of students graduating based on entry cohorts; the number of semesters students take to graduate; the average levels of engagement within a specific cohort; and perceptions of preparedness and levels of self-efficacy between newly enrolled and continuing students. These findings indicate areas where the students may need support as these variables have been found to impact persistence and graduation. Future analysis using larger samples from the data collected over the life of the grant will offer empirical evidence related to the target population’s interface with the institution and its impact on persistence and graduation.
In addition to the project-specific efforts described above, the University has recently implemented and/or has plans to implement the following initiatives this semester or by Fall 2014, which are aimed at increasing student persistence, retention and graduation, including students in the target population:

- **Intrusive Advising**: The creation of what is known as “intrusive advising” is being spearheaded by Advising Center. The intent of this initiative is to target at-risk students early in the process to ensure they are getting the advice and guidance they need to succeed. At-risk populations include but are not limited to: students entering with low high school GPAs; lower-division transfer students; students identified at mid-semester as at-risk, students who go on academic warning; and students who do not meet their academic milestones. As data on the effectiveness of intrusive advising is gathered, it will be used to adjust the program to specific at-risk populations at UH Hilo.

- **Retention Manager**: UH Hilo has recently created and filled a new Retention Manager position. In an effort to improve recruitment, retention and graduation, as well as close the educational access and success gap between underrepresented minority students and the general student population, the University has made affirmative steps towards embracing a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) approach that will cross over and permeate all units and divisions and rely on a strong collaborative partnership between academic affairs and student affairs. The State of Hawaii is a member of Complete College America’s Alliance of States committed to reducing time to degree and increasing the number of citizens who complete a higher education credential by 2020. The Retention Manager’s duties include but are not limited to: Freshmen Guaranteed Academic Schedules, community college transfer and 2+2 partnerships, administration of a variety of assessments to entering/departing/graduating students, sophomore-year experience initiatives, coordination of the new EBI-MapWorks retention platform and/or similar student success management platform software, and early warning/early intervention activities. In addition to managing and implementing a portfolio of campus-level programs/interventions, this new staff person also serves to encourage, facilitate, expedite, and foster linkages and coordination among retention programs offered that the college and unit level in a way that minimizes inefficiency but maximizes the effectiveness of the proactive, interconnected “web of support” for UH Hilo students.

- **Freshmen Guaranteed Schedules**: “Freshmen Guaranteed Academic Schedules” refers to registering new freshmen into classes over the summer so that they get in to appropriate classes and do not register for classes they do not need. The schedules were based on the findings that six-year graduation rates were significantly higher for students who complete at least
24 credit hours, including English 100 and one Mathematics course during their first year. All freshmen students are now guaranteed enrollment in English 100 during their first year at UH Hilo. The system was initiated a few years ago, was expanded this past fall semester, and will continue to be improved and strengthened for Fall 2014. Initial assessment of the system indicates that students who were given guaranteed schedules persisted at higher rates than those who did not. However, their academic performance lagged somewhat.

• **“15 to Finish:”** The University of Hawaii System initiated in 2012 the “15 to Finish” campaign, based on research that suggests that students who take at least 15 credits a semester are more likely to do better in school and not only graduate, but graduate on time. Only a small percentage of students took 15 credits each semester, and research showed marked differences between students who took 15 credits and those who took less in terms of GPA, credit completion ratio, and persistence. As a way to encourage students to take “15 credits to finish” a degree in four year, four-year academic “maps” and check sheets for all majors at UH Hilo were developed. The four-year maps serve multiple purposes: (1) guide first-time freshmen so that they can graduate in four years, (2) guide academic advisors, particularly when they are constructing academic plans with dismissed students, and (3) provide an important framework so that majors can meet academic milestones. Academic milestones are courses that students need to complete by a certain stage of their academic careers so that (1) pre-requisites for upper-division courses are finished early in their academic careers and (2) students who complete their majors in a timely fashion receive financial aid throughout their academic careers. This second item is important because many UH Hilo students come from low socio-economic backgrounds and depend on financial aid to attain their degrees, particularly with regard to the target population. The goals for the four-year maps are to increase the number retention rates and the rate of students graduating within four years.

• **Freshmen Village:** A “Freshman Village” will be piloted Fall 2014 for first-time, full-time freshmen. This initiative combines a first-year residential living-learning component with academic and social support programs, as well as efforts to promote and facilitate direct faculty involvement with students in the village. The basis for this initiative comes from a wealth of higher education research that consistently demonstrates the positive effects on retention and persistence associated with on-campus residency for undergraduate students in general, and of living-learning communities specifically. An assessment plan is in place to track first-time, full-time freshmen fall to fall retention in the village and compare their retention rates to freshmen not in the residence halls and therefore not in the village. In addition, responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement will also be compared to determine if there are any significant effects associated with
a comprehensive, first-year residency program. Finally, academic performance and academic progress towards academic goals will also be assessed and compared. Efforts will be made to disaggregate the data so that comparisons of low-income, first generation, and historically underrepresented ethnic minorities are also specifically examined.

- **English Language Instruction:** The University is currently considering revising its English curricula for non-native speakers of English. The current proposal has some potential positive benefits for students from the target population, as it would, for example, make them eligible for a greater number of scholarships.