

ABSTRACT

Strengthening Chaminade University's & Kapi'olani Community College's Capacity to Graduate Career and Workforce Ready Students

The Title III cooperative initiatives between Chaminade University of Honolulu (CUH) and Kapi'olani Community College (KapCC) aim to significantly enhance the institutions' capacities to prepare students for the workforce, particularly targeting the needs of underserved communities. These initiatives are designed to increase retention and graduation rates by providing strategic, focused, and intentional preparation aligned with workforce demands. Activities such as faculty development seminars, curriculum redevelopment, student development programs, and the integration of enhanced guided pathways are tailored to address the specific vulnerabilities of serving high percentages of Pell-eligible, first-generation, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, often affected by broader socio-economic disparities.

In response to the evolving landscape of higher education and the urgent need for graduates equipped with practical skills and knowledge, both institutions are committed to adapting their educational strategies. This involves embedding advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) as well as soft skills into the curricula. The proposed annual faculty development seminars will empower educators to effectively integrate these technologies and soft skills into their teaching, supported by the new role of Workforce Development Coordinator. This coordinator will bridge the gap between current industry practices and educational delivery, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and responsive to labor market trends.

Furthermore, the initiatives include practical approaches to student engagement and career readiness, such as the *Ka Hiki Mai* student development seminars, which aim to enhance students' professional skills through direct interaction with industry leaders. Alongside these, applied industry-driven undergraduate research opportunities and industry-supported internships provide hands-on experience, facilitating a seamless transition from academic settings to professional environments. The introduction of software solutions to streamline guided pathways and the reconfiguration of campus spaces to centralize essential student support services and foster a flexible workspace and collaborative learning environment also play crucial roles in improving student outcomes. Together, these efforts are strategically aligned to not only fulfill the immediate educational needs of students but also to foster long-term economic mobility and contribute positively to the community. Through these comprehensive and collaborative efforts, CUH and KapCC aim to set a benchmark for effective education-to-employment pathways that are inclusive, equitable, and aligned with the needs of today's diverse student population.

Over the five years of the grant, our goal is to increase overall fall-to-fall retention rates to 76% or higher and the six-year graduation rate to 66% or higher for *CUH student participants*, and to realize a 67% or higher retention and 22% or higher three year graduation rate for *KapCC participating students*. In addition, we expect the *overall retention* rates at each institution to increase 3% overall by the end of the fifth year and six year graduation rates at CUH by 2% and three year graduation rates at KapCC by 2%.

Finally, our Title III initiatives also address Competitive Preference Priorities 1 & 2 through activities that directly address student social, emotional, and academic needs, while promoting college completion, and post-enrollment success.