UH Manoa Faculty Ambassadors Program Report for 2006-07

Executive Summary

The Faculty Ambassadors Program was established by the University of Hawaii at Manoa Faculty Senate in 1997. The original purpose of the Faculty Ambassadors Program was to establish a bridge between the University of Hawaii and K-12 schools in the state. The program continues to maintain this objective and has evolved and grown on various levels since inception. Funding, coordination and administrative support for the program has shifted from University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) offices to GEAR UP Hawaii. GEAR UP is a federal program to help low-income students prepare for success in college. In order to build a sustainable program beyond the federal grant cycle, GEAR UP seeks to gain support from the University of Hawaii (UH) to make progress towards the goal of having a viable, long-term UH Ambassadors program.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the program has expanded significantly and several important improvements have been made. The number of students served, faculty/staff involved, and assorted activities all increased greatly. Approximately 1,300 students from 30 elementary, middle, and high schools on Kauai, Hawaii, and Oahu were served, compared to approximately 400 students served in 2005-06.

To accommodate requests from schools, the UH Manoa Faculty Ambassadors Program was expanded to include non-faculty from Manoa and other UH campuses. Thirty-one Ambassadors based at UH Manoa, Kapiolani Community College, Honolulu Community College, Hawaii Community College, UH Hilo and UH West Oahu participated in the program in 2006-07. This represents an 82% increase in faculty/staff participation from the previous year (increased from 17 to 31 participants) and a two-year increase of 500% (increased from 6 participants in 04-05). Thirteen of the Ambassadors participated in more than one activity in 2006-07. The majority of the Ambassadors who have signed up to be Ambassadors remain UH Manoa Faculty (62 of 71, 87%). This group will likely remain the foundation of the program, however a more accurate and inclusive name for the program would be UH Ambassadors.

This past school year, Ambassadors were involved in various types of outreach activities including mentoring, in-class presentations, career fairs and UH campus visits. School staff benefited from the Ambassadors program as well by receiving teaching and curriculum development assistance. Participating UH faculty and staff included professors, instructors, counselors and graduate assistants.

In 2006-07 outreach efforts to establish relationships with schools and Ambassadors were expanded. Examples of outreach and communication efforts include a Faculty Ambassador Start-Up Meeting in August 2006, production and distribution of program flyers to all high schools in the state in September 2006, a presentation to the UH Manoa Faculty Senate in February 2006, redesign of the Faculty Ambassadors website and the launch of the Ambassador Newsletter, Leo Kulana in August 2007.
While the Faculty Ambassadors Program has grown and evolved significantly, GEAR UP the organization that manages the program is a temporary, federal grant with a limited budget and staff. In order for the program to have long-term viability and reach students across the state more effectively, the program needs to become institutionalized within the UH system, with resources allocated to the project provided by a more sustainable source. The relationships developed by UH Ambassadors with schools, teachers and students provide a vital link for local communities with the state’s only public institution of higher education. The program seeks support from UH offices to keep the connections to the communities we serve strong and healthy.

*Full report available at hawaii.edu/uhtmfs/faculty_ambassadors or by request to GEAR UP Hawaii, 956-5443*