Examining the Role of Online Courses in Native Hawaiian Culture and Language at the University of Hawaii

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Abstract: The unique geographical nature of the state of Hawaii creates hardship in attempting to offer adequate instruction and resources to students in all the communities that the University of Hawaii (UH) system Distance education plays a significant role in attempting to serves. address some of these hardships. The purpose of this needs assessment (NA) was to collect University of Hawaii student feedback in regards to their needs, preparedness, perceptions and learning preferences for online courses in Native Hawaiian culture and language. This study utilized the UH Maui College, Molokai Education Center as a sample site to collect feedback from those who plan to utilize distance education in pursuing an Associate Degree in Hawaiian Studies, or to take courses in Native Hawaiian language and culture. A comprehensive survey was developed and administered to collect student feedback on their opinions of distance learning at UH, with an emphasis on online courses. A review of their responses provides readers with a unique opportunity to understand the student experience from the perspective of those in some of the most remote areas served. Strengths and weaknesses of online course delivery are reviewed as well as recommendations for strengthening distance education planning and implementation.

Introduction

The University of Hawaii (UH) system features campuses and outreach centers on all of the main Hawaiian Islands. The unique geographical nature of the state of Hawaii creates hardship in attempting to offer adequate instruction and resources to students in all the communities that the UH system serves. Distance education has been able to remedy some of these issues by allowing instruction to be delivered to some of the most remote areas in Hawaii. The bridges built through the various forms of technology allow students in these areas to participate and benefit from higher education.

One of the rural communities highly affected by distance learning opportunities offered by UH is the island of Molokai. UH serves Molokai by offering instruction through the UH Maui College, Molokai Education Center (UHMC, Molokai), which enrolls approximately 200 students per semester in certificate and associate degree programs. A recent development at UHMC, Molokai, includes the origination of distance education courses where Molokai instructors are given the opportunity to share their expertise with UH students statewide. This broadens the student base that UHMC, Molokai is able to reach. The program is no longer limited to offering instruction to Molokai residents. This study utilized UHMC, Molokai as a sample site to understand the role of distance education for those interested in taking courses in Native Hawaiian language and culture.

A report published by Radford and the National Center for Education Statistics (2011) highlighted the growth experienced in distance education enrollment from 2000-2008, the highest of which occurred at two year public institutions. UHMC, Molokai remained consistent with this national trend where 56.1% of students participated in online courses in the 2012-2013 academic year (Molokai Education Center, 2013). This was up from 46.3% reported in the previous academic year (Molokai Education Center, 2012). These statistics indicate a strong student demand for online learning. On Molokai, this demand stems from necessity, as many of the students need to participate in distance learning to complete degrees.

In Fall 2013, a new associate degree in Hawaiian Studies was launched across the UH Community College System. In preparing to announce the new degree option to Molokai students, it was discovered that there were limited distance learning options for students interested in pursuing this opportunity. For example, in Fall 2013, UH Maui College offered no online courses in Hawaiian studies (University of Hawaii, 2013). The student base in rural areas around Hawaii limits the amount of face-to-face Hawaiian studies and language classes that can be offered; therefore, distance learning options should be available to students to supplement face-to-face courses and allow them to graduate within a reasonable timeframe. In addition, a study done by researchers at the University of Hawaii Department of Educational Technology found that the main barrier to Native Hawaiian participation in distance learning was the lack of opportunity to participate (Menchaca, Yong & Hoffman, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this needs assessment (NA) was to collect University of Hawaii student feedback in regards to their needs, preparedness, perceptions and learning preferences for online courses in Native Hawaiian culture and language.

Methods

The first step in developing the needs assessment was to collect baseline data on online course offerings in Native Hawaiian culture and language in the UH system. This data was used to collaborate with the UHMC, Molokai coordinator and a UHMC Hawaiian studies and language instructor on designing the questions to be included in the needs assessment. The process of soliciting input aligned with the best practice of ensuring a voice at the table for all parties who may be affected by the results of the project (Hillman & Corkery, 2010).

The process of developing and implementing the needs assessment followed a mixed methods approach to evaluation by looking at the University of Hawaii objectives for distance learning (objective approach), soliciting input from the UH Maui College, Molokai Coordinator (management approach), soliciting input from a Hawaiian studies and language instructor (expertise approach) and finally by conducting the needs assessment with the potential end user (participant approach) (Ross, 2010).

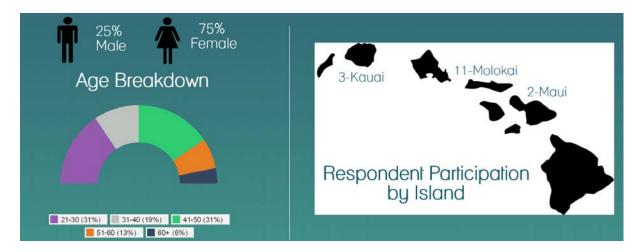
Once the questions were finalized, an electronic survey was created using Google Forms. The final survey included 30 questions, which took participants an estimated 30 minutes to complete. The survey was comprised of Likert scale, multiple choice and open-ended questions. The Likert scale questions asked students to rate their responses from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

While feedback from students who participated in any form of instruction was desired, the final section of the survey specifically focused only on those who had experience in online learning. Since this section addressed student online learning preferences, those who had not taken any online courses in the past were asked to skip this section. UH students who were enrolled in one or more Native Hawaiian language or culture courses that originated from UHMC, Molokai either through face-to-face delivery or distance education were recruited as participants for this study. The recruitment list consisted of approximately 80 potential respondents. The invitations to participate were sent via email to their UH accounts. A first group of approximately 50 students were solicited in the Fall 2013 semester, and an additional 30 in the Spring 2014 semester.

Responses were collected from 16 students in a Google spreadsheet. These data were then exported to Microsoft Excel for further observation. Mean scores were calculated for all Likert scale questions and multiple choice question responses were broken down by the percentage of students to select each option. Open-ended questions were reviewed and ranked based on similarities in student responses. The data collected were then placed into charts and visual aids to simplify navigating the student responses.

Results

To remain consistent with the objectives for this study, the results section has been broken down to address the different measurement indicators: student need, preparedness, perceptions and learning preferences. A demographic section was also added to illustrate the make-up of the student respondents.



Demographics

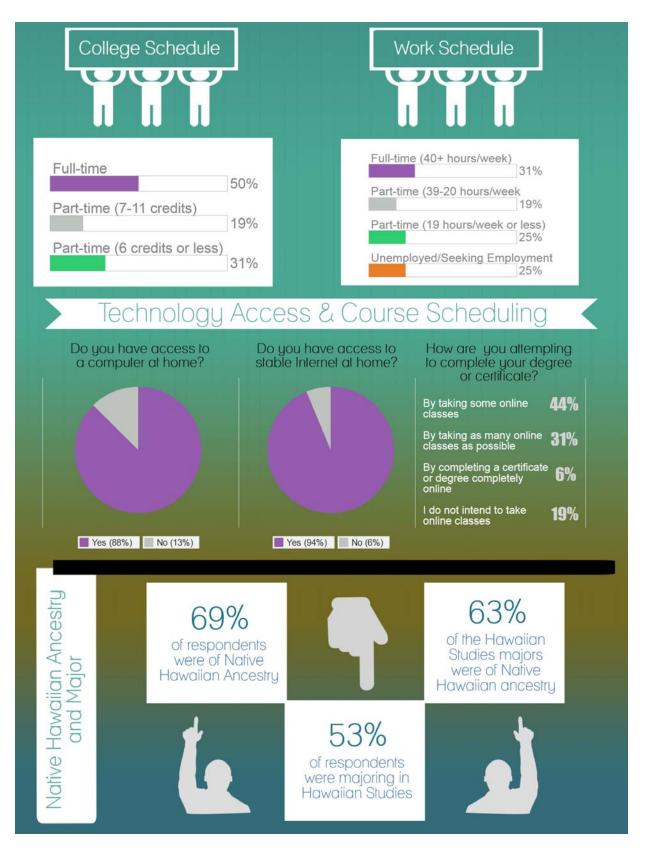


Figure 1. Student demographic breakdown.

The male to female ratio of respondents is consistent with the student gender breakdown at UH campuses, where female participation is greater than male. The geographic location of the participants was not limited to the island of Molokai although all the courses selected for this study originated from the island. However, the fact that not all islands and rural communities in Hawaii were represented serves as a limitation of this study.

An overwhelming 81% of students plan to take at least one online course to complete their degree or certificate. Despite this, there were a few students who lacked a computer and stable Internet connection. Access to this hardware is critical for success in online classes and may be difficult to acquire in remote areas of the state.

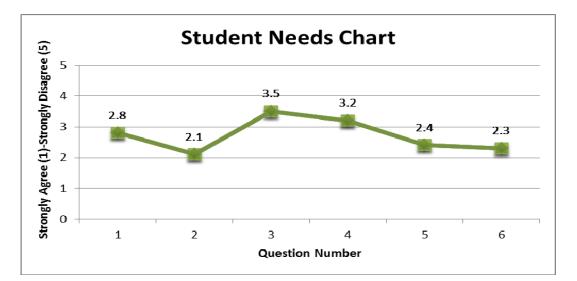
Many of the respondents maintained busy schedules. 50% of them were full time students and 75% were employed either part-time or full-time. The majority of the respondents, 69% were of Native Hawaiian ancestry. However, only about half 53%, were Hawaiian studies majors.

Needs

A total of five Likert scale questions were posed in the student need section of the survey. The questions explored whether there was an unmet need as far as online courses being offered in Native Hawaiian language and culture at UH.

The question with a mean score indicating the strongest level of agreement, 2.1, was that students would take more online courses in Native Hawaiian culture if they were available. This was followed closely by the second most agreed upon question, with a mean score of 2.3, which indicated that students felt enrolling in distance education courses were necessary for them to earn their degree.

Students reported the lowest level of agreement, 3.5 and 3.2, with the idea that UH Maui College and the University of Hawaii system offers adequate distance education course options in Native Hawaiian language and culture. Those were the only questions which received a mean score higher than 3.0 in this section (see Figure 2). Furthermore, these questions received the highest mean score when compared with responses to all Likert scale questions in the entire survey.



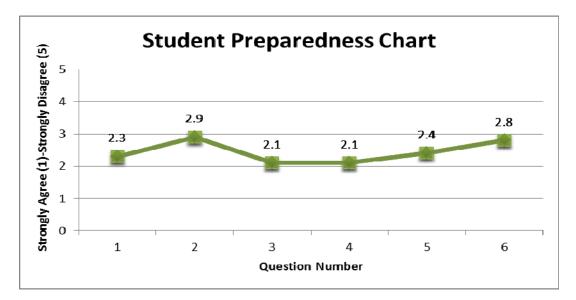
#	Question	Mean Score
1	I would take more courses in Native Hawaiian <u>language</u> if they were available online.	2.8
2	I would take more courses in Native Hawaiian <u>culture</u> if they were available online.	2.1
3	UH Maui College offers a sufficient number of distance education courses in Native Hawaiian language and culture.	3.5
4	The University of Hawaii system offers a sufficient number of distance education courses in Native Hawaiian language and culture.	3.2
5	Online course options will help me complete my certificate or degree in a timely manner.	2.4
6	Enrolling in distance education courses is necessary for me to earn my degree.	2.3

Figure 2. Responses to student need.

Preparedness

This section of the needs assessment also included Likert scale questions, which asked students to rate their preparedness for online courses. The most interesting result from this section is that students reported feeling highly confident in their ability to succeed in online courses in Native Hawaiian culture, 2.1. In direct contrast, students reported the strongest level of disagreement in their confidence in their ability to learn the Native Hawaiian language online, 2.9.

With a mean score of 2.1, students felt access to a computer and a stable Internet connection was important for success in an online course. On the opposite end, students gave the second lowest agreement rating, 2.8, to the fact that UH offers adequate training and support for distance education students. Overall, this section was the only with no mean scores of 3.0 or higher, indicating that the questions in this area were the most agreed upon by students. This indicates that overall, participants felt prepared for success in online classes.



#	Question	Mean Score
1	I am confident in my overall ability (technical skill, time-management, self- discipline) to succeed in courses delivered via distance education technology.	2.3
2	I am confident in my ability to learn the Hawaiian language in an online course.	2.9
3	I am confident in my ability to learn the Hawaiian <u>culture</u> in an online course.	2.1
4	I believe access to a computer and Internet connection at home is important to succeed in distance education courses.	2.1
5	University of Hawaii clearly explains what it takes to succeed as a distance education student prior to registration in online classes.	2.4
6	The University of Hawaii provides adequate support (e.g. training, IT support, etc.) for me to succeed as a distance education student.	2.8

Figure 3. Responses to student preparedness.

Perceptions

To understand student learning perceptions, survey participants were asked three openended questions. The first question asked students if they thought the UH system was adequately meeting the following performance measure, "Increase the number and diversity of programs by at least one program every two years that can be completed through distance learning technologies" (University of Hawaii Community Colleges, 2008). The majority of students were unsure, with about half of these students specifically reporting that they have no experience in online courses. The rest of the respondents were split almost equally. Those who responded yes agreed because they were able to complete degrees and certificates through a combination of face-to-face and distance programming, and with the support of outreach site staff. One student agreed that the measure was being met, but thought that it was for a limited amount of programs. Those who disagreed that UH was meeting the above performance measure cited transferability issues and distance education programming needs are only being met for Liberal Arts majors. Students were also asked about the advantages and disadvantages of participating in online classes. The top advantage cited was flexibility and convenience. The second most popular response was that these courses were necessary for students to earn their degrees without having to relocate. Other reasons mentioned were building technology skills and saving money on transportation to and from classes.

The main disadvantage of taking online courses, as perceived by the students, was limited communication with the instructor of the course. One student specifically mentioned this was the reason they would not take Hawaiian language courses online. The second most popular response was the time management and discipline required to succeed in online courses. A few students cited technology issues as a challenge, especially for those in more remote areas with limited access to the technological requirements for participating in online instruction. Furthermore, students mentioned the awkwardness of online communication and issues with finding testing centers to complete proctored exams.

Finally, students were asked to think about an instance where they succeeded in an online class and share the most important factors that influenced their success. Participants reported instructor quality as the most influential factor on their personal success in an online class. Students mentioned the instructors' ability to communicate, knowledge of the subject matter, passion and organizational skills as factors that influence instructor quality.

In addition to the open-ended questions, two Likert scale questions were asked. Students agreed that the quality of distance education instruction at UH Maui College met their expectations by responding with a mean score of 2.2. Students also agreed, yet not as strongly, that they are able to learn just as much online as they do in face-to-face courses. This question received a mean score of 2.6.

Learning Preferences

The learning preferences section included three types of questions: multiple choice, Likert scale, and open-ended. The first multiple choice question asked students what their preferred method for distance education instruction is. The response options were Internet, Skybridge/HITS and Cable. Over half the students, 69% preferred online courses. The second most popular response was Skybridge/HITS at 31%. None of the students surveyed selected Cable as their preferred method for distance education instruction.

The second multiple choice question asked students how quickly they expect their online course instructors to respond to questions. Most of the students expected a response from their instructors within 12 hours. The longer the response time, the fewer students selected that option.

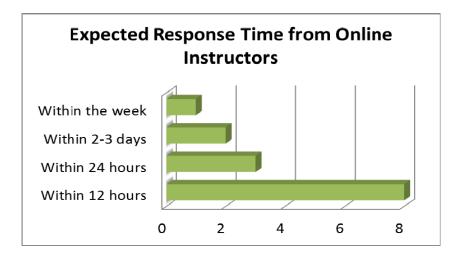
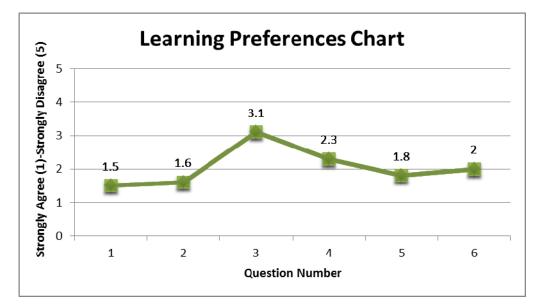


Figure 4. Expected instructor response time.

The second part of this category reviews responses to the Likert scale questions. This section received some of the best scores as far as student agreement level with three out of the six questions receiving median scores of lower than a 2.0. Students agreed that the following types of assignments, listed in the order ranked by students, help to support their learning in online courses: worksheets, individual projects, quizzes and tests, discussion boards/forums and group assignments. The only type of assignment to receive a mean score above 3.0 was group assignments. Students agreed with a mean score of 2.0 that they feel comfortable sharing their opinions in online discussion boards.



#	Question	Mean Score
1	I believe <u>worksheets</u> in distance education courses help to support my learning.	1.5
2	I believe <u>individual projects</u> in distance education courses help to support my learning.	1.6
3	I believe group projects in distance education courses help to support my learning.	3.1

4	4 I believe <u>discussion boards or forums</u> in distance education courses help to				
	support my learning.				
5	I believe <u>quizzes and tests</u> in distance education courses help to support my	1.8			
	learning.				
6	I feel comfortable sharing my honest opinion in online discussion boards.	2.0			

Figure 5. Responses to student learning preferences.

Finally, students were asked to provide their opinion of using the UH online course management system, Laulima, in an open-ended question. The majority of responses from students were very positive. Many students cited how they were afraid of the system when they first started taking online courses but quickly discovered that it was easy to use and navigate. The only negative feedback received was how instructors use it differently, which one student commented can be confusing.

Discussion

When looking at the overall responses from students, it appears that most are content with distance education at UH. None of the questions were given a mean score higher than 3.5 on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). What this study helps to identify, however, are areas where UH can strengthen and improve distance education. It has also helped to confirm a need for more distance education programming in Native Hawaiian language and culture to support students wanting to pursue the new Associate Degree at the community college level.

When observing the demographic profile of the respondents it is very clear that distance education students take on an overwhelming amount of responsibility. The majority of respondents were attending school full-time and balancing school with work. This is an important consideration for online faculty and college administrators to take into consideration when planning individual courses and complete college programs.

There was a large response from students of Native Hawaiian ancestry. UH strives to increase performance measures for this particular demographic which was well represented in this study. On the other hand, only about half of the respondents were Hawaiian Studies majors. This indicates that there is demand for distance education courses in Hawaiian Studies and Language even for non-majors.

The questions receiving the lowest level of student agreement were those which asked if UH Maui College and the UH system offer adequate course options in Native Hawaiian language and culture. It is important to note, however, that students are more confident in their ability to take culture classes online than language. One of the reasons cited by a respondent is the limited amount of direct instructor to student communication in online courses. Students were not only confident that they can succeed in Native Hawaiian culture courses online; they also agreed that they would enroll in them if more were available. Student participants recognized the need for distance education as an integral part of helping them achieve their degrees and were confident in their ability to succeed in online courses. It is clear from their responses to the open-ended questions on the benefits and challenges of taking online courses, that they have a thorough understanding of the pros and cons of online learning. Online learning is no longer a new method of instruction and the student participants may be savvier than assumed to be by faculty and instructors. Students also recognized that distance learning is attractive because it is a flexible and convenient option that does not require them to relocate.

As far as their preferences for online learning, it was interesting that students felt individual projects, with a mean score of 1.6, were far more important to their learning in online courses than group work, with a mean score of 3.1. This may be a result of students' busy schedules and their inability to meet synchronously with other members in the class. It was also surprising to find that online discussions were rated second to last with a mean score of 2.3, considering that online discussions or forums are an essential component of most online courses at UH. The varied approaches to implementing discussions or forums in courses may not always represent best practices for online learning and may be included as a formality as opposed to a tool that can support critical thinking and learning. Faculty and instructor professional development opportunities specific to teaching online can help to solve this issue. Finally, the Laulima course management system was overwhelmingly met with positive student feedback.

It appears that one of the strongest indicators of student success in online courses is the quality of the instructor. This finding is limited and should be explored further to determine what the UH system does to measure the quality of online instruction and how it aligns with the different factors mentioned by students. It would also be interesting to explore professional development opportunities specifically for online faculty and instructors at UH. It is also important to note that instructor response times are highly valued by students. Majority of the participants expected to hear back from an instructor within 12 hours or less.

While student responses remained mostly positive throughout the survey, there are a few areas that can be improved upon. For example, none of the survey respondents listed cable courses as a preferred method of distance education instruction. When developing strategies for increasing distance learning opportunities in Native Hawaiian language and culture, this method should not be considered as an essential part of the expansion plan.

In regards to distance education overall, students perceived ability to learn just as much online as they could in a face-to-face class should be improved. This question received a mean score of 2.6. With students acknowledging this method of instruction as necessary to achieve their desired degrees, their confidence in their ability to learn online should be met with a stronger level of agreement.

Transferability issues between the campuses and scheduling distance learning programming to meet the needs of more than just the Liberal Arts degree seekers also needs to be addressed. The fact that students were split as far as agreeing whether or not

the UH system is meeting their goal for distance learning to support students in remote areas is indication that students either are not being made aware of system efforts, or that more work needs to be done in this area to boost student confidence. Finally, support services (e.g. training, IT support, etc.) for distance education students can be increased to promote student success in distance learning.

Conclusion

This needs assessment aimed to provide the UH system with data necessary to assist in planning for distance education options for students interested in pursuing the new Associate Degree in Hawaiian Studies. However, there were several limitations to this study. The first is the limited number of responses. Out of the approximately 80 students solicited, only 16 responded. Second, not all islands and rural locations in Hawaii were represented which provides a limited perspective on distance education at UH. Finally, the data were limited to student self-reported responses which were not verifiable since anonymity was critical in the study.

Overall, the data collected provides a glimpse into the experience of the distance education student who has shown interest in taking courses in Native Hawaiian culture and language. The comprehensive survey sent to students not only aimed to identify a need for distance programming in Native Hawaiian language and culture, but also to provide data that would help support the development of a plan to address these needs. By exploring student need, preparedness, perceptions, and learning preferences, this study can serve as a tool for taking the next steps in program planning.

Addressing these needs for students in remote areas is of critical importance. Because of the reliance on distance education programming, these students need adequate course offerings in order to achieve their academic goals. By announcing a system-wide degree program in any discipline, the UH system has a responsibility to ensure all their constituents are afforded an equal opportunity to achieve academic success.

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Appendis Needs Assessment Survey

Welcome Page

Examining the Role of Online Courses in Native Hawaiian Language and Culture

Mahalo for your participation in this study. The purpose of this needs assessment (NA) is to collect student feedback in regards to their needs, preparedness, perceptions and learning preferences for online courses in Native Hawaiian culture and language at the University of Hawaii. This survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

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I reside on the island of

- 🔿 Molokai
- 🔿 Maui
- 🔿 Lanai
- 🔿 Oahu
- 🔿 Kauai
- 🔿 Hawaii Island
- O Niihau
- O Other:

l attend school

- O Part-time (6 credits or less)
- O Part-time (7-11 credits)
- C Full-time (12 or more credits)

l am a Hawaiian Studies major

- O Yes
- O No

I am of Native Hawaiian ancestry

- O Yes
- O No

I have access to a computer at home.

- O Yes
- O No

I have access to a stable internet connection at home.

- O Yes
- O No

My gender is

- O Male
- O Female

My current age is

- O 15-20
- O 21-30
- O 31-40
- O 41-50
- O 51-60
- O 60+

Page 1 (continued)

My current employment status is

- O Full-time (40+ hours per week)
- O Part-time (39-20 hours per week)
- C Part-time (19 hours per week or less)
- C Currently unemployed or seeking employment

How many semesters have you been enrolled in college?

What is your current cumulative grade point average (GPA)?

- O 4.0-3.0
- O 2.9-2.0
- 1.9 or less
- C I do not have a grade point average

I am attempting to complete a certificate or degree program

- O By taking some online classes
- O By taking as many online classes as possible
- O By completing a certificate or degree completely online
- C I do not intend to take online classes

How often do you meet with an academic advisor?

- O I see my counselor for advising every semester
- O I see my counselor for advising some semesters
- C I completely self-advise
- O Unsure



A series of Likert-scale questions follow. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement from highest (1-Strongly Agree) to lowest (5-Strongly Disagree).

I would take more courses in Native Hawaiian LANGUAGE if they were available online.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	0	Strongly Disagree
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Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	0	Strongly Disagree
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Strongly Agree	0	$^{\circ}$	0	0	0	Strongly Disagree
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Strongly Agree O O O O O Strongly Disagree

Page 2 (continued)

I am confident in my overall ability (technical skill, time-management, self-discipline) to succeed in courses delivered via distance education technology, e.g. Skybridge/HITS, Internet & Cable.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	0	\circ	C	\circ	\circ	Strongly Disagree
l am confident	in r	ny a	bilit	y to	lear	n the Hawaiian LA
	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	0	$^{\circ}$	0	0	0	Strongly Disagree
l am confident	in r	ny a	bilit	y to	lear	n the Hawaiian CU
	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	0	Strongly Disagree
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Examining the Role of Online Courses in Native Hawaiian Language and Culture

The University of Hawaii has set the following performance measure in their UH/UHCC Strategic Outcomes and Performance Measures 2008-2015 report, "Increase the number and diversity of programs offered to or in underserved regions by increasing the number and types of programs by at least one program every two years that can be completed through distance learning technologies." In your experience as a UH student, do you think this goal is being met? Please explain why or why not.

What are some advantages to taking online courses?

What are some challenges with taking online courses?

I	
« Back Continue »	80% completed
Powered by	This form was created inside of University of Hawaii.
- Google Drive	Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms

If you have NOT taken any online courses at UH, please skip this page and submit your responses.

This last set of questions asks about your experience with online learning at the University of Hawaii (UH). If you have NOT taken any online courses at UH, please skip this page and submit your responses.

My preferred method of distance learning instruction is the following

- Internet
- C Cable
- O Skybridge/HITS
- O N/A

When you send an email to an instructor of an online class, how quickly do you expect a reponse?

- O Within 12 hours
- O Within 24 hours
- Within 2-3 days
- Within the week

I believe the following types of assignments in distance education courses help to support my learning

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Worksheets	0	0	0	0	0
Individual Projects	0	0	0	0	0
Group Projects	0	0	0	0	0
Discussion Boards or Forums	0	0	0	o	0
Quizzes and Tests	o	c	0	o	0
Video Conferencing	0	0	0	0	0

The quality of distance education instruction at UH Maui College has met my expectations

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Agree O O O O O Strongly Disagree

Page 4 (continued)

I feel comfortable sharing my honest opinion in online discussion boards.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Agree O O O O O Strongly Disagree

I feel I am able to learn just as much online as I do in face-to-face courses.

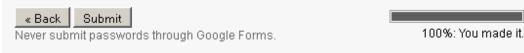
1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Agree O O O O O Strongly Disagree

Please share your thoughts on using Laulima (the University of Hawaii course management system) to conduct or support distance education instruction.

Think about a distance education course that you have participated in where you succeeded at a high level. What course factors supported your success?

Mahalo nui for your participation. Please click the submit button to record your responses.



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