

editorial

JAISHREE ODIN AND HUNTER MCEWAN

New technologies have brought about a second communication revolution with greater life transforming power than the printing revolution. The Internet has become a network of communication and a vast archive of knowledge. It has also become a working space for distance independent communities of learning. Schools, universities and colleges, nationally and globally, are exploring the potential of new technologies to improve instruction in the classroom and to increase access for students. Many inter-university and intra-university alliances are emerging as participating institutions share their resources to reach ever-greater numbers of students. These online partnerships involving university systems and university-school partnerships are making institutional walls more permeable as students click their way with ease from one campus to another and register for courses through shared portals.

Online education is of special importance in the state of Hawai'i. The island topography makes it difficult, if not impossible, for many students to participate in higher education, especially in areas isolated from population centers and on neighbor islands. In addition, the University has evolved as a system of commuter campuses, and, as result, the continuing-education course offering is very limited. Such barriers exclude a vast number of potential students and working professionals who, because of work commitments, cannot access campus-based courses. Online distance learning in Hawai'i has the promise to solve many of these problems of access, by making courses and programs available to a diverse student population located anywhere in the state, and even outside the state. Thus, the ten campuses of the University of Hawai'i (UH) system as well as Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) have moved aggressively to extend their reach and offer new options to students that the old system failed to reach.

In this issue of *Educational Perspectives*, we provide a Landsat-like overview that offers details of the many online projects that are now underway in the state, with a particular focus on work now being undertaken at UH and in the DOE. The contributors describe their

experiences, offer accounts of their successes and note some of the challenges they have had to overcome in developing and implementing online distance learning programs for students and professional technology training programs for teachers.

Deane Neubauer, UH-Mānoa's Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, helps set the scene by describing the global context and the challenges that the university faces as its involvement in distance education projects increases. Neubauer offers three useful principles that will act as guide to action in proceeding with these developments. **Victor Kobayashi**, the former dean of Outreach College, discusses the state of online distance learning in the nation and describes how these "tradition-shattering changes" are affecting the tradition-bound practices of colleges and universities. Kobayashi's article provides a useful road map of the distance education terrain as well as offering a lucid explanation of the various terms and distinctions that have developed in the field.

Jaishree Odin's essay describes the Asynchronous Learning Project at UH. This project, funded by the Sloan Foundation, was instrumental in creating a number of online programs at UH Mānoa and UH Hilo. Her article highlights some of the important issues and developments involved in creating sustainable and scalable online distance learning programs at the University of Hawai'i. **Rebecca Lee** presents an insider's view of the challenges facing faculty at West O'ahu, in their efforts to create a new online degree and new certificate programs. The perseverance of the faculty and the support of the West O'ahu administration have been central to their success. The institutional commitment has been considerable and faculty members receive three credits of release time, or the equivalent in overload pay, when they develop an online course for the first time. In addition, West O'ahu's collaborative faculty development model has resulted in an environment where faculty share their experiences with one another in special workshops on various pedagogical aspects of online learning. **Marilyn Walsh's** piece on community colleges shows

how all seven UH community colleges are effectively working together to create a joint Associate of Arts program to be delivered through distance technologies. Most of the courses are being offered online. The success of this collaboration is reflected in increasing enrollments in online courses offered by the community colleges.

Paul McKimmy, Director for Outreach and Technology for the College of Education, highlights the efforts of the College to create hybrid models of distance learning to train DOE teachers throughout the state of Hawai'i. At the same time that these online initiatives are coming to fruition at various campuses, the Hawai'i Department of Education is also making rapid strides in making online learning accessible to students and technology training available to teachers.

Hawai'i DOE's Advanced Technology Research Branch, through a series of grants obtained over last several years, has been able to create a Magnet E-Academy, Oracle Internet Academy for students, as well as creating professional development programs for teachers and administrators. Since technology support and faculty development is an integral part of creating a sustainable and scalable distance learning system, **Hae Okimoto** describes the various initiatives of the UH's Information Technology Services to train the faculty in technology as well as pedagogy so they are better prepared to use technology effectively in both bricks and clicks classrooms. The final article, by **Haruo Nishinosono**, looks beyond the developments in Hawai'i and represents some of the important and related work underway at Bukkyo University in Kyoto, Japan.

Cover Photo: A montage of photographs featuring students engaged in online learning designed by **Mike Tamaru**, publications manager in the Office of External Affairs and University Relations, UH Mānoa.



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Hunter McEwan is professor of education in the Department of Educational Foundations, UH Mānoa. He is the editor of *Educational Perspectives* and currently serves as the coordinator of the Master of Education in Teaching Program at UH.