TO BE
THE BEST
YOU CAN BE

College Opportunities Program
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
To Be the Best You Can Be is a collection of stories written by a group of University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa graduates who entered the University through the College Opportunities Program. We are grateful to them for taking time out of their busy lives to make this project a reality. They represent only a small sample of a much larger group of successful college graduates who, in the majority, were initially refused admission to UHM for a variety of reasons.

The College Opportunities Program (COP) began in 1970 at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa (UHM) as part of a national Model Cities Project funded by the federal government. In 1973 the Hawaiʻi State Legislature authorized general funds for COP to recruit, screen, select, and prepare Hawaiʻi residents statewide for a “Summer and First-Year Residential College Experience” on the UH Mānoa campus. COP expanded in 1990 selecting 125 Hawaiʻi residents who were denied regular UHM admission, disadvantaged, ethnically underrepresented on campus, nontraditional, or in need of a structured residential college-entry experience. Selected students are committed, entering first-year undergraduates with academic potential and a desire to earn a baccalaureate degree. Many of these students have gone far beyond their early dreams and expectations.

In 1990 the Minority Student Retention Service (MSRS), staffed by a half-time coordinator, was introduced as a “two-pronged pilot project.” Its goals are to assist minority students in their sophomore year or above and to inform undergraduate faculty of minority students' retention issues and problems. This publication is an MSRS project and was produced with the assistance of Kimberly Fu (COP 1991 Volunteer Student Assistant) and Jodi Tallman (MSRS Graduate Assistant).

Lesley Tyson, Coordinator
Minority Student Retention Services

Cover drawing by David Keola, COP 1983
Administrative Officer, School of Ocean & Earth Sciences & Technology
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, BBA, 1989
In 1973 the Hawai'i State Legislature authorized general funds for COP to recruit, screen, and prepare Hawai'i residents statewide for a "Summer and First-Year Residential College Experience" on the UH Mānoa campus.

COP expanded in 1990, selecting 125 Hawai'i residents who were denied regular admission, disadvantaged, ethnically underrepresented on campus, nontraditional, or in need of a structured residential college-entry experience.
I first heard about COP when a friend invited me to an information session given by a recruiter at our high school. After expressing interest, I was encouraged to "go for it" by my high school counselor. My personal insecurities, family responsibilities and fear of failure had prevented me from doing so much for most of my life. After going through the process of applying, interviewing, and actually getting accepted, excitement began to build and helped balance out the fear. Prior to this, my application to Mānoa had been denied due to low SAT scores, so I was still concerned about my ability to complete a program of study there. The sensitive and encouraging COP staff recognized and diligently worked to help ease these fears. Despite the professional advice my counselor gave me against taking a science course my first semester, my decision to do so was respected. I signed up for microbiology and experienced the reality of college after receiving my first F in my academic history. "Live and learn." The COP staff allowed me to "live and learn" without my making too many major mistakes. Their confidence in me helped me build and maintain confidence in myself. My family, social, academic, and spiritual life was greatly tested during this transition. With my faith and the loving support of the COP staff, I completed a bachelor’s degree and a professional diploma in elementary education at Mānoa in 1987.
During the spring of my senior year my parents asked me what I was going to do after graduating. I had no idea. They suggested college, but I didn’t have the grades to make it into a college like UH Mānoa. I thought about going to UH Hilo for a year then transferring to Mānoa.

A couple of friends told me about COP so I thought I would give it a try. I got accepted into the program and that was one of the best summers I ever had. During that summer I realized how important it is to have a college education and decided to continue my college education.

COP gave me the support and guidance needed to point me in the right direction. If it wasn’t for them, I would be lost. Because I am a first-generation college student, I had no one to guide me. I don’t think I would have been as successful as I am now if I entered the University through the regular way. The first day of that fall semester, I felt like I was one step ahead of the new incoming freshmen.

Now that I was in college, I needed to decide what to major in and what to do for a career. My parents never forced me, but they always said becoming a doctor is good. Because I was always fascinated with science, I decided to major in pre-med zoology. Although it was hard and I didn’t “ace” all of my classes, I passed all of my classes and received a bachelor of science degree in zoology in the fall of 1992. It took me awhile, but I made it.

I felt my grades were not good enough to get into medical school, so I decided to get my master’s to prove I could handle graduate-level work. I applied to the School of Public Health and was accepted into the fall 1993 semester under conditional status because of my undergraduate GPA. I passed my first semester with a 3.7 GPA. I was taken out of conditional status and was now a regular student. I passed my second semester with a 3.63 GPA. I graduated in the fall of 1994 with a Master’s in Public Health, specializing in environmental and occupational health.

Next destination is medical school, my ultimate career goal.

Some advice to future COP students. Decide and plan early. Try not to waste too much time because time waits for no one. Make sure your objectives are clear and don’t ever, ever give up!
Scott I. Arakawa, D.D.S

SELF-EMPLOYED DENTIST, AIEA, HAWAI'I

COP 1983
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
University of Massachusetts at Amherst, National Student Exchange
University of Iowa College of Dentistry, D.D.S.

I entered the College Opportunities Program in the summer of 1983. My older brother was currently ending his freshman year at UH, and a student who lived in his dorm was a COP student. I got to know this person and he told me about the COP program. After talking with my high school college counselor, it was apparent that I did not have the right classes or grades to get into UH as a freshman. I knew that I could do college-level work, but I guess I really didn’t apply myself academically in high school. Surfing and hanging out came before school work, and I was beginning to realize that it was going to cost me getting into a four-year university.

I seriously considered entering the armed services and, as a last-chance effort to get into UH, I applied to COP. To my great surprise, I was accepted into the summer program.

The COP staff dealt with the anxieties that all of us had: can we make the grades, can we live away from home without our parents. The support of the staff made all the difference in a lot of us making it through the summer program and that first year.

If there is one suggestion I can make for incoming students, it is to set goals. The higher the better and make every effort possible to achieve these goals as soon as possible. Procrastination leads to excuses why you cannot achieve these goals. Another program, the National Student Exchange, offers a great opportunity for students to go away to a Mainland college at a minimum cost. I attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the whole experience definitely made a positive impact on myself.

COP should encourage all types of students not only the underrepresented ones. There are a lot of students who, with the nurturing of the College Opportunities Program, can achieve great things in their lives.
ALOHA! My name is Madonel R. Pascual, a Captain in the United States Army stationed in Fort Hood, Texas and an independent representative of Excel Telecommunications (part-time business). I’m a 1983 graduate of Kohala High School, a former 83 COP participant, and a graduate of University of Hawai’i at Mānoa with a bachelor of science degree in agriculture, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army ROTC.

First, I would like to thank the many very important people who have been the “drivers” behind my success and who helped me reach my goals and dreams. They really do come true!

Bill Chambers Director, Mrs. Monnette Yagodich Counselor and the COP staff for this “once in a lifetime OPPORTUNITY.”

David Fuertes, my high school agriculture teacher/adviser, for his great wisdom and philosophy of life and education.

My mother Pet R. Pascual for her love and insistence of the importance of our Filipino culture and traditions.

My wife Susie M. Pascual for being my girl then and my lady now, and who has given us our energetic son Donel.

The one thing I want to pass on to the current and future COP students are my “Lessons Learned.” Set a GOAL. Make a PLAN to accomplish your goal. Your GOAL + a PLAN = ACTION! You have just completed the first step toward a successful higher education. What are you waiting for?

I have found that to be successful in whatever I do, I associate only with the people who want to do the same. If you have any questions about the military or becoming a business associate, or just want to correspond, please feel free to contact me through the COP office. I keep them informed of my address changes.

1st Cavalry Division motto: “First Team, Black Knights!”

God bless and good luck in pursuing higher education.
The reason I applied for COP was because I did not get accepted to UH Mānoa due to my low SAT scores. My counselor Bill Park at Pearl City High School told me about this program he heard of and that I should try it out. Although I got in, COP called me a week later than everyone else because I was an alternate.

The only fear I had was to pass all my classes. The COP staff helped a lot with my schedule, on-campus housing and moral support. It also helped having some COP students in my same classes.

If I did not enter UHM through COP, I would not be as successful as I am now because I would still be in college. I would have had to start at a community college first.

There are several significant people in my life that help me attain my goals.

- My mother who has always been there whenever I needed her and gave me encouragement.
- Melissa Zen COP Counselor who always knew that I would do well in anything I did.
- Ute Goldhule UH Nursing instructor always gave me encouragement, support and always told me that I should take credit for what I do and sometimes that means standing alone.
- Sherril Tomita Health Careers Opportunity Program always gave me support and knew that I could and would do well in anything I set my mind to. I was more worried about me than she was.

The only mistake I made was to study very hard and so had very little college social life. But I do not think of it as a big mistake and have made up for it after college.

The way COP can better serve our underrepresented minorities is to be more known to all the high schools.

I would like to thank everyone who has given me support and encouragement throughout my college years. Look at me now:

- An RN, BSN at Kuakini Medical Center in the ICU (4 years)
- Assistant nursing supervisor at Straub Urgent Care Westridge (2 years)
- Worked at HMSA as a nurse consultant (1 1/2 years)
- Worked at Kuakini Medical Center as an RN in Medical-Surgery (2 years)
- Worked at the UH Health Center (6 years)
- Worked at Kuakini Medical Center Student Tech Program (1 year)
COP 1983
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, BA in Dance and Theatre, 1990
The American University, Washington, D.C., MA in Performing Arts

COP was my last chance to go to a university or college. I did not want to settle on going to a community college. Basically, I totally “blew-off” my years in high school and did not plan on going to college. I really did not have a clue as to what I wanted to do with my life after high school. During my earlier years at Farrington High School, I lived for the moment and not for the future. Failing a course, just getting by at high school and not paying much attention to my GPA did not help my chances for getting accepted to UH or any other college.

It was not until my last year of high school I realized I needed a plan. As I noticed my peers planning on going to college either here or on the Mainland, I too started to become excited and began wanting to attend college. With my much-to-be-desired grades and GPA, I knew I would not be accepted anywhere. In fact, I did apply to UH on my own only to be rejected. Although I totally possessed the desire and the potential to become a hard-working student, the truth of the matter is that I did not have the minimum requirements to be accepted as a UH student.

Then I remembered someone a year older than me who got accepted to a program called COP. I was curious and looked into it. Thus, I found out that this program catered to minority students possessing the desire and potential to become a UH student. That was me! My last chance to go to college! Thank God. I applied and soon got accepted!

I had mixed feelings of overwhelming joy and the dreadful thought of not making it through the program and the inevitable four years to come. My greatest fear was of not succeeding. The pressure was on to do well. The great counselors and staff at the time (Fefe, Monette, Bill and JoAnn) all were instrumental in making sure I was confident and prepared for my first year as a freshman. They were there with support and advice throughout all my years at Mānoa. They’re great to “talk story with.”

If not for the COP program, I would not succeed at anything I challenge myself to do, particularly through my art: dance. My liberal arts background at UHM and being exposed to many options made me realize what is potentially in store for me for the taking. It opened up my eyes and mind to a whole new world to be explored.

I feel the reason I am drawn to eclecticism and very much consider myself to be an eclectic person is that I am not influenced by one person or a single perspective of life, but by many inspiring individuals that I had the
fortunate experience to cross paths with and learn from. These diverse role
models greatly influenced and helped mold my philosophies of life. These
people are: Janice Camara, Student Housing; Dr. Suzanne Carbonneau,
dance historian/professor and critic for the Washington Post; and Doug
Elkins, New York choreographer and artistic director of the Doug Elkins
Dance Company.

Every college student makes mistakes; I made quite a few myself.
Therefore, I honestly subscribe to the “crash and burn” theory in life
meaning that you go through life learning. If you make a mistake, learn
from it and go on hoping you won’t make the same mistake. Difficult
times, obstacles and overcoming these adversities will only make you a
stronger, wiser, and a better person.
"No man is an island and no man can stand alone." These are the words I have lived by to reach my goal as a registered nurse. My success as a productive citizen was not an individual effort, but rather a collaborative joint task by my parents, myself and most importantly by the staff of the College Opportunities Program.

My name is Edgar Lucas, an immigrant from the Philippines and a graduate from Moanalua High School. I was accepted to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa through an unconventional admission process. I did not go through the strict and structured conventional admission process established by the UHM Admissions Committee, which requires a certain GPA and acceptable SAT scores. Instead I was lucky enough to be accepted into the College Opportunities Program. COP is a humanitarian program that provides opportunities for disadvantaged students who possess strong potential, knowledge, determination and skills to become successful, productive professionals. As a U.S. immigrant I had many disadvantages besides learning the American culture and ideas. I am aware that these disadvantages could have altered my goals to become a registered nurse. The existence of the College Opportunities Program, however, changed my situation as a disadvantaged individual. COP saw the potential beyond my disadvantages as an immigrant. The program allowed me to take my personal and academic disadvantages and turn them into a determination to attain my goal as a registered nurse. Initially, the program provided personal counseling that increased my self-worth and self-esteem as an individual and a student. The program also provided vital information about the UHM system and how it functions, and as a result I became stronger as a person and a student. My disadvantages as an immigrant eventually dissipated and became a valuable memory. Today, I feel as successful as any of my fellow students who were accepted to the University through the conventional admission method. In 1991, I received my bachelor of science in nursing. Thus, the assistance and existence of the College Opportunities Program took on the role of a guardian angel and surrogate parents to ensure that I could become a successful professional.

My success as a registered nurse did not come easy. Always remember that the love of others, especially your parents, can assist your needs as a student and an individual. There are many sacrifices my parents made to help me achieve my goals. In addition to the state and federal
grants I received through the University, my mother worked 16 hours a day as a hotel maid and my father worked as a security guard to meet my financial needs. I have learned that the love of my family helped me conquer the barriers I have encountered as an individual.

Strong motivation and a sense of realistic goals and directions were the foundation of my success, for without this self motivation and self direction, the road toward my goal would have been confusing and gloomy.

The collaborative effort and assistance of the College Opportunities Program and the sacrifices that I and my parents made, helped me attain my career goal. I have become someone special and successful. Presently, I am working as a registered nurse at Straub Clinic and Hospital and pursuing a master's degree in public health.
My philosophy of life “AINOKEA,” given to me by a good friend (Glenn Yahiku, COP 1978) who knew my past, describes my present attitude and faith in my future. I am an alumnus of the University of Hawai‘i, the 1978 College Opportunities Program, and McKinley High School.

I grew up with PROUD parents: so proud that it hurt the family. Too proud to admit we were poor. Too proud to ask for help. How bad was it? I couldn’t afford a school lunch for only 25 cents. I couldn’t apply for the free lunch program, because my parents did not want anyone to know of our financial problems. Even with our financial woes, my mom kept us together and out of trouble. The summer before my senior year, my father and I started to argue often about our situation. That summer my entire paycheck went to buy food and help my brothers with school supplies and clothes. I made a decision then to change the unhealthy lifestyle of our family. My family was already at the bottom. The only way to go was up.

Entering my senior year, I knew I had an uphill battle. My academic record was below average, but I knew I had to try. I started attending college recruitment workshops. However, after the third workshop, the college/career counselor, my senior class counselor, and some of the teachers tried to keep me from attending any more workshops. They told me that I’d probably end up being a garbage man or truck driver. This was frustrating and beginning to piss me off.

I almost gave up hope. Until, a graduate student from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa assigned to do her practicum work at McKinley told me about the College Opportunities Program. At first, I thought, a program at the University of Hawai‘i, no way would I qualify. But was I wrong! I fit every requirement. I asked the college/career counselor why wasn’t there a workshop about the COP program. He said his first priority was the college prep students, he’d get to the rest later. I got more pissed off.

A personal comment: I love my alma mater, but when I have children they will attend a private school. It’s not that I think I have no faith in the public school system. I know I have no faith in the system.

The applications process was simple. However, forms requiring some type of fee were difficult. In fact contrary to normal procedures, most of these forms were not completed until the middle of my freshman spring semester. My interview was also unique. The initial interview is usually 30
minutes, then you come back for the group interview. My interview went on for over an hour. Afterward the counselor asked if I wanted to have a group interview. A little confused I asked, “Don’t I need it?” The counselor surprised me by saying she would already recommend that I get accepted into the program. Stunned I asked again, “Don’t I need it?” She said, “Maybe for the experience, but it’s not necessary.” So as you can guess, I left the interview a little happy. I am still humbly honored to be the only applicant selected on the initial interview.

Only my family knew I got accepted. I wanted so badly to tell those counselors and teachers who had no faith in me, but I kept humble. I told myself that I’d come back one day. The remainder of my senior year was different. My attitude and priorities changed. My school work improved. All I needed now was to improve my study environment. This is where COP and the University of Hawai‘i changed my life.

My family problems did not disappear when I entered COP; it was just another part of my life. My parents were still unwilling to disclose their financial problems, which made it difficult to complete my financial aid application. My parents didn’t file any income taxes and could not afford the financial aid application fee. Fortunately, with dedication and commitment by COP’s Financial Aid Assistant Glenn Hirata, I was designated an independent student. This process involved working with all the financial aid counselors and scholarship directors. My name was famous at the financial aid office. I used my COP stipend for my partial tuition payment, and housing application and financial aid application fees.

The problems at home became worse so moving back home for the break wasn’t an option. With the exception of moving home for the summer after my freshman year, I lived on campus, year round, throughout my undergraduate years. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to go home—I had no home to go to. Our house had deteriorated so badly that it became unliveable. In fact during my sophomore year, my youngest brother stayed (illegally) with my friend Darren DeMello (COP 1978) and I, so he could complete his senior year in high school. My friend is and will always be a part of my life since he took in my brother like his own.

At the University of Hawai‘i, I grew up quickly. I took responsibility for my own actions. If I screwed up, I took the blame. My most treasured achievement wasn’t the college degree or proving to anyone I could do it. It was taking pride in my ability, building self-confidence, and striving for excellence. Although, the college degree did allow me to go back to my teachers and counselors, place my diploma in front of their faces and tell them #1$ YOU. I knew I didn’t need to prove it to them—but it sure felt good!

I didn’t realize that my friend’s comment “AINOKEA,” would be so important in my life. It’s not a Hawaiian word, nor does it have any cultural significance. It’s a simple concept-I NO CARE. It simply means only you can decide what is right or wrong. It’s taking responsibility for your own life. Before I blame anyone, I should blame myself because I should have known
better. In the professional environment, never be satisfied with what you have; always strive for the highest; and believe in yourself. Satisfaction never ends.

I am presently a legislative analyst for the chairman of the Hawaiian Home Commission. The best way to describe my position is dealing with pissed-off Hawaiians. When it comes to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, there are a lot of pissed-off Hawaiians. It’s not a position for everyone. You must have commitment, dedication, and understanding. Some people, including Hawaiians, tell me I should be ashamed for working for DHHL. A few even hold me responsible for all the problems. Well, AINOKEA! The people who know me have confidence that I can make a difference. I am not ashamed for working at DHHL. We need new blood in there. As for being responsible for all the problems. Yes, I’ll take the responsibility because I’m trying to make a difference.
While I was in class, I got a note from my counselor Ms. Tashiro. I wondered to myself, “What have I done that I have to see her?” Then I calmly went to her office.

Ms. Tashiro said, “There is a summer program called College Opportunities Program at the University of Hawai’i. This program gives disadvantaged students an alternate way to enter UH. It will prepare and help you as an undergraduate. I think you would be a good candidate, so I asked you to come in.”

“Wow. This is a great opportunity for me I thought to myself. Sure, I’m a well-qualified candidate because I relocated as a refugee from Laos not too long ago. And my general education has not been too solid.”

Ms. Tashiro asked me, “Do you have an interest?”

Without hesitation I said, “Oh, yes!”

It was exciting for me to stay in a dorm with all the other COP students. But I didn’t get used to it. I was physically tired most of the time because of my disability. In high school, I didn’t have to walk as much as at UH. I skipped breakfast and lunch almost every day because walking to the cafeteria would have drained me. During some of those hot days in class, I had a hard time keeping myself awake. And when the evening came, I think I was the first one to go to bed.

The courses COP offered were excellent, and they did prepare us. Because of the large amounts of work we were given, I was overwhelmed. I knew the importance of the materials so I saved them. Throughout my undergraduate years, I occasionally flipped through those handouts to refresh those college survival techniques.

To all the new students, you should save all of those important materials. They will save you lots of time and trouble in the future. Furthermore, I really do encourage you to get involved in activities and organizations either in school or the community. This will carry much weight as you move on with your future goals.

My life would be different if I didn’t go through COP. I would have been lost and confused without the help of COP. It gave me a sense of security and confidence and a chance to experience dorm life. I consider COP as the first door to my future.
My name is Mamie-Jean (Valdez) Lamley and I am a successful 1978 graduate of the College Opportunities Program. In 1982, I earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and embarked on a career working with mentally challenged people.

Today I am the Director of Area Development and Outreach for Hawai'i Special Olympics. I am also an international executive of my own business, a public speaker, and seminar leader.

Since graduating from COP and the University of Hawai'i I have traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada. As a certified Special Olympics instructor, I teach others about cultural diversity, goal setting and time management, supervision and collaborative working relationships, and working with mentally challenged individuals. What I enjoy most is sharing my story about how a "small-time country girl from Wai'anae is making it in the real world."

As I look back on my junior year in high school, I would never have predicted how much my life would be altered by a presentation on the College Opportunities Program.

My dream was always to go to college. However, growing up on the Wai'anae Coast presented some obstacles. Just mentioning the fact that I was from Wai'anae seemed to be a strike against me. Any time I mentioned my desire for higher education, someone would laugh. The comments I had to deal with were not always positive. I can remember some saying, "people from Wai'anae don't go to college. They just burn around and live at the beach," or "You cannot go to college, you speak funny kind," or "Why waste your time, I don't know anybody from Wai'anae who made it. Anyway, everybody think Wai'anae people don't know how to read!"

Fortunately, my mother and father believed the only way out of Wai'anae was through a college education. So with the help and encouragement of my high school counselor Dennis Sakuma, my English teacher Debra Lum, my track coach Harry Mitsui, and my mentor Marvin Sanemitsu, I filled out as many applications for admission, financial aid, and scholarships as I could.

The day Bill Chambers came to speak about COP, I immediately knew that I could greatly benefit from this support program. As an honor student, student body secretary, captain of the track and cross-country
running team, and an active volunteer with the special education class, I believed myself to be a very responsible and successful student. However, I felt I lacked some of the skills and academic confidence needed to succeed at a big university.

My fears grew as I completed the selection interviews held by COP. Three of my biggest worries were (1) was I good enough to be at the University, (2) was I smart enough to handle all of the classes, and (3) how could I get by without anyone finding out I was from Wai‘anae?

When I was accepted into COP, my fears turned to other concerns, such as being in a new environment (all that concrete), being on my own, adjusting to a roommate I didn’t know, meeting new people from different cultures, being accepted and, most of all, a realization of how inefficient my communication skills were.

It was a rude awakening to find that people could not understand a word I was saying. My most embarrassing moment came when I ran for secretary of our COP ohana. I was dressed in a big T-shirt and baggy shorts, and making a speech in the only language I knew—Pidgin. As I looked out into my audience, my peers were all laughing at me.

It was then that I saw my opponent. Dressed in a three-piece suit, high heels, and stockings, she announced that she was a former Miss Filipina Hawai‘i and, to my astonishment, she spoke perfect English. From that moment on I promised myself I would learn to speak standard English even if it killed me.

I am very thankful I did not have to resort to such drastic measures. Instead, with the support and guidance of the COP instructors, staff, and counselors, I voiced my concerns and got some very constructive feedback. With many of my fears, the COP team helped me find positive alternatives to some very emotional and touchy concerns. I learned first-hand about interperson communication, peer counseling and group interaction.

With sound advice from COP supporters, I enrolled in courses that helped alleviate some of my biggest fears while expanding my knowledge and academic skills. I took classes in study skills, writing, speech, drama, communication, research and creative writing, and human development.

As a COP student, I had a head start on friends who did not go through the program. The first advantage was living on campus during the summer—staying on campus allowed me to get accustomed to the University. I learned where everything was and where the offices of important services and people I would need in the future were located.

Campus life allowed me to get involved in the many activities offered to students who lived nearby. It also eliminated the wasted travel time of the four hours it would have taken to catch the bus from Wai‘anae to town. Instead, I used my time efficiently to study, play intramural sports, and relax in my dorm room between classes.

The second advantage I gained was meeting very important people such as deans of the different colleges, class counselors, professors, and Annabelle Fong, the financial aid officer.
The third advantage was learning to be independent, yet knowing where and who to turn to when I needed help. COP exposed me to different programs and activities that could assist me in succeeding at the University. Some of these excellent services were freshman writing workshops, tutors, study-skills lab, and library assistance.

The most important advantage, though, was the overall confidence and comfort level I possessed at the end of the COP summer program. I knew that I could "hold my own" and whenever there was a concern or problem I had someone to turn to. The COP staff and counselors gave me insight and advice on my status throughout my first year. This assistance allowed me to focus on my weaknesses before the semester was completed.

It made such a difference to be in COP. Three of my five friends who decided not to go through COP never made it past the first year at the University. The remaining two took the semester off and decided to attend Leeward Community College in the fall of 1979. When I asked a couple of these friends why they weren't still at Mānoa, they said that "they were lost, didn't know where to go for help, and were too embarrassed to ask."

Within the first year of college, I went from an insecure freshman to a responsible college student. I walked with pride and self-confidence through my next three years. When I graduated, I knew that I was now empowered to take control of my life and accomplish whatever I wanted to.

I truly believe that the magnanimous and collaborative efforts of the COP staff contributed to my success at the University of Hawaiʻi, as a professional, and as a contributing citizen of my community.

I would like to thank COP for the opportunity of a lifetime. It is through programs such as these that give people like me the vehicle to achieve all that we can be!
My name is Misty S. Bagasol. I graduated from Leilehua High School in 1989 and was accepted into the COP program that year. I graduated with a BA in Communication in the spring of 1994 and currently I am a graduate student in communication. I was granted a graduate student assistant position in the Communication Department, and am now the student adviser of the undergraduate and graduate programs.

During high school, I wasn’t sure if I even wanted to go to college. My parents never pressured me to go, but said their piece and left it up to me to decide. Fortunately during the beginning of my senior year, I decided that I did want to go to college and I wanted to go to the University. I applied and wasn’t accepted. I was about to give up hope when I found out about COP. Luckily, I applied and was accepted.

I have to admit the thought of attending the University both scared and excited me, but more often than not it scared me. It was overwhelming. Was I ready to handle all this? Could I handle this? I won’t know anyone. I’ll get lost. These were just a few concerns that scared me. I come from Wahiawa where everyone knows everyone; this was really going to be a big adjustment.

I found out that the campus wasn’t that big after all, and not all classes had 200 students, only the introductory courses. During COP you learn building locations, shortcuts, and even all the locations of the vending machines and snack bars. You make so many friends that during your first two years it is guaranteed that you will have some friends from COP in your classes.

COP isn’t only about academics. The counselors informed us about the “ins and outs” of the University system: how to register, services that are available to students, organizations that we may be interested in, financial aid, housing, and much more.

A word of caution-beware the first year and don’t play too much! It can make you or break you. Hey, I’ll be the first to admit that I played a hell of a lot that first year, and to be honest that was the best year of my college life. But if all you do is play you will definitely pay the price later. You need to find a balance, because all the fun in the world during that first year in college is not worth losing a chance to earn a college degree.
Because COP students enter the University through the back door we may have to work harder than others.

COP gives minority students, especially those in rural areas and the Neighbor islands, the opportunity to go to college—opportunity they may not have otherwise had. There are many minority students who are college material; however, due to economic, social or academic factors they are set back from the rest. COP encourages these students to continue their education at a university level. When I attended COP they only accepted 75 students and now they accept almost double that number, giving many more students the opportunity for a college education.

I thank the COP staff members for the support and confidence they gave me during my college years. They were there for any problems I encountered academically, socially or economically. Most of all I am thankful for the chance they gave me to prove to myself and others that I am just as capable as the rest of them and I have the degree to prove it. COP believed in me, even when I doubted myself.

COP is a learning experience of academics, campus life, campus procedures and of growing and maturing. That COP summer experience was the best summer in my life. The friends I made and the things we did were all a part of the great college experience. COP is more than about school and getting through school; it is about friendships and being part of a big family. When I think of COP, I think of OHANA!
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The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
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