



POLICY BRIEF

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Informing the Education Community

Satisfaction of Upper-Division Students and Dropouts at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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POLICY ISSUE: WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS OF UH STUDENTS TO PERSIST OR DROP OUT OF UH MANOA?

What Was Studied?

Enrollment data for UH Mānoa between fall semester of 2000 and fall semester 2001 were compared with surveys of students who persisted in their degrees and those who dropped out. (153 'persisters'; 73 dropouts) Despite these low numbers, an attempt was made to understand the psychological, intellectual, academic, social and financial influences on student decisions to continue. Responders from both groups were more likely to be female than the overall enrollments, and more likely have graduated from a high school within Hawai'i.

Common Patterns and Attitudes of Students

The two groups did not provide dramatically different responses to many of the questions in the surveys. A fairly consistent 20-25% of students in *both* groups appear to be most critical or less than satisfied with their experience at Mānoa. A slightly higher 30% reported difficulty in gaining access to required courses. Approximately 80% of respondents reported working while attending school. Both groups reported spending about the same amount of time on homework. The most negative reports dealt with faculty, with only 5% believing that faculty cared about them as individuals. Only 2% felt faculty teaching styles "matched" their learning styles.

Author's Conclusions

The factors most influential in the decision to drop out were:

- Inadequate academic preparation for college work;
- Financial need;
- Trouble balancing the demands of their jobs with school;
- Frustrations and disappointment with faculty teaching, ability to demonstrate the relevance of core requirements to everyday lives, and lack of caring for students as individuals;
- A poor academic advising system;
- Difficulty in finding required courses.

Relevance of The Study

This study provides *some* qualitative and quantitative insights into the reasons for dropping out. However, it is perhaps most useful in identifying *common perceptions* of both dropouts and non-dropouts as to the quality of the Mānoa experience, particularly their view of the UH Mānoa faculty.