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## **A Tale of Two Islands: Nurturing Talent through Bridging, Connecting, and Transforming**

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**Abstract:** (for papers only) Max 150 words

This article will describe how grounding Honors Program interdisciplinary curriculum in powerful perspectives of Irish and Hawaiian cultural worldviews through a “two island cultures lens” via an online pedagogy facilitated Honors student bridging, connection, and transformation. This is a much needed paradigm for students across the globe who are living in a world roiled by existential issues such as climate survival, social separation and stratification, and an uncertain jobs future further impacted by technology and Artificial Intelligence. As an Honors Faculty who was born and raised in Ireland, and who now works at the University of Hawai'i, the author is uniquely placed to assimilate these worldviews to promote and support Honors student success. Anonymous evaluation survey results illustrate effectiveness.

### **1. Introduction**

Intentional and strategic student life-cycle pedagogical and curriculum interventions are critical for talent development as students, as with people in general, simply cannot yet know what they do not yet know. This seems obvious, but in fact, high achieving students often express that they feel they must arrive at university prepared with bachelor's degree level knowledge and acumen already in place. One key element in higher education Honors learning and talent development is creating safe teaching spaces for students to explore, to think critically and creatively, and to ask questions. Creating environments for students to become empowered through critically examining the synergy between practical and emotional choices, and the consequent interface with academic pursuits and development is vital.

The student acquisition of skills and knowledge is an iterative investment and process, but not all educational systems or approaches inculcate or embed this foundational educational reality as concrete praxis and policy. Honors and high achieving students in America, in general, have often progressed as a result of having access to, being exposed to, and absorbing enhanced knowledge and information partnered with scaffolded opportunities to assimilate, transfer, and shape that knowledge (Castagno-Dysart, et al., 2019; Vygotskii & Cole, 1978). For example, this could take the form of Advanced Placement (AP) courses (especially access to an AP Research course), or an International Baccalaureate curriculum and program. Opportunities that, which must be noted, should be available to all students who wish to engage in rich learning, but too often are not (Chatterji et al., 2021; Harper, 2021).

Research is a signature of University Honors programs and education. The Honors pathway is dedicated to a culminating research project, through which a student acquires and practices significant academic and professional skill sets in a subject matter area. Yet essentially these Honors and research training protocols cross-pollinate and positively affect the whole student in diverse areas. These include the change agent skill building so important in social mobility and manifested in employment, graduate, and professional program arenas. One key question is how can Honors Faculty encourage and empower diverse students to become more comfortable with and embrace the development of these rich talent skill sets and adopt an open deep learning mindset, especially across disciplines?

Honors students (and any student, really) do not always find embracing the messiness that constitutes becoming a successful researcher to come easily. Research, and any meaningful endeavor, can regularly include excess amounts of persistence, effort, and “failure.” Too often, “failure” is anathema to the self concept of an Honors student. Yet as Dweck (2014) and Brown (2016) have shown, failure is not inherently terminal, and is best seen as a “not yet,” not as a “this is never going to happen - better give up - run away” (Brown, 2016; Dweck, 2014). Emotional literacy is not simply having greater awareness and self perception, which is so valuable, but is also linked to situational response and dynamic flexibility (Ninivaggi, 2017). These are the “in the moment decisions” which build the greater whole. These are inherently strategically adaptive tools for all students, but especially for those who have been burdened with systemic inequity and diminished access.

A central scholarly goal of the University (whether in the sciences, humanities, or creative arena) is to effectively facilitate the discovery and application of holistic and resilient solutions to pressing complex societal problems and issues. This is fundamentally realized through academic pathways and majors, but optimally amplified and concretized by thoughtful curriculum and learning choices that integrate and facilitate interdisciplinary learning opportunities in the classroom, and beyond (Ambrose, 2010; Bowen & Watson, 2017).

My role in this project as instructor is rooted in Hawaiian ‘ike (knowledge) under the tutelage of a *Kumu* (teacher), and from my own culture Irish *eolas* (knowledge). These worldviews emphasize collectivism, connection, and interconnectedness.

As a Truth Racial Healing and Transformation Fellow and Facilitator, the deliberate nurturing of *pilina* (connection) and intentional awareness of the thread that runs through the foundational premise of life as expressed by *mo'oku'auhau* (record of existence in thought and form) are part of the backbone of engaged teaching. Mindfulness and *kuleana* (action based shared responsibility) through relationships such as *kaikua'ana* (elder/mentor) and *kaikaina* (younger/learner) build powerful connections (Christopher, 2023; Christopher et al., 2021; Danso, 2016; Hofstede, 2011; Lipe, 2016; Ó Cruaí, 2022; Osorio, 2014; Potts, 2003; Quigley, 2016). Social Support Networks, another way of describing connections, are one of the key Social Determinants of Health (Marmot, 2005). In the learning space, this approach allows students to develop trust. Trust can support deeper learning by helping to interrupt anxiety and fear cycles (especially for disenfranchised students who have not been afforded the right to learn or given the tools to do so successfully). Trust may support students to more habitually access pre-frontal cortex functioning, a building block of emotional intelligence (Williams, 2023; Javanbakht, 2023).

Foundational connectedness can be found in Irish sayings such as:

“Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine.” Under the shelter of each other, people survive. “Ní neart go cur le chéile. There is strength in unity.” and “Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam.” A country without a language is a country without a soul. - Pádraig Pearse (Deane et al., 1991; *First Nations Ireland, Exploring Indigenous Values of Irish Culture*, 2021)

Teaching in Honors through a caring, cultural, connecting worldview fosters and empowers student scholar engagement and nurtures the building blocks for talent development. A facilitated reflection process reflective and inclusive of indigenous epistemology and grounded in cultural awareness can enable students to make relevant connections to their own selves, identities, understanding, and goals. Perez (2021) discusses this phenomenon and states, “Additionally, creating equity necessitates asking the hard questions associated with creating student-centered honors programs. At the core is a questioning of who the students are collectively and individually” (Harper, 2021, p. xi). Kotschevar et al. (2018) notes that in an Honors education, “Notable good practices included a higher likelihood of meeting with faculty, discussing career goals with faculty, and discussing social, political, and world issues outside of the classroom” (Kotschevar, et al., 2018, p. 139).

Teaching is a curated act of co-creation. While teaching in a physical classroom the physical lights stay on (and hopefully the metaphorical ones, too!). In a dynamic educational space, learners are prompted and scaffolded to engage in deep learning through deliberate teaching methods. This similar methodology employed in an online classroom with the cameras on (the lights being on!) also invites connection and co-learning. Fuiks (2002) examines this aspect of cooperative education in Honors, stating, “A common element in honors courses is the emphasis on active, rather than passive, learning modes in the classroom” (Fuiks & Clark, 2002, p. 65).

Using a carefully curated curriculum delivered online, teachers can thoughtfully encourage and empower students in real life. “Real life” is increasingly complex with elemental themes of “life or death” enormity, and habitually forefronting an interdisciplinary mindset and awareness is a necessary mental strategy. One must note that online instruction requires access to technology and devices, which are not always available equitably and can be a

limitation. Equal access to high speed broadband is a global issue. The digital divide exists even in the backyard of Silicon Valley, the cradle of modern computing and technology (Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 2021), and is a critical issue to address.

Yet, the modern Honors student typically operates in a digital landscape. This landscape does not have to be insular, isolated, and disconnected. For example, in the Hawaiian archipelago students in the UH System live on a number of islands. Currently in the Honors 300 Writing Intensive and Communication course that I teach, one of the enrolled students lives on the island of Hawai'i and another on the island of Maui. Previously enrolled students have lived many miles from the UHM campus, or are returning to college parents enrolled in online only versions of Undergraduate majors such as Social Work. In instances like this, technology fosters equity and access. Honors can embrace technology through caring and accessible context and delivery thus developing deep thinking and learning habits. As Taylor (2002) points out, "Discussion, the conversation type most important for the development of critical thinking skills, is characterized by thoughtful and reflective conversation that involves a careful consideration and analysis of the variety of viewpoints represented in the class" (Fuiks & Clark, 2002, p.80).

Knowing oneself as a whole student, scholar, and researcher is a lifelong identity that can positively influence persistence and achievement, and in turn prepares students to participate in the civic endeavor of solving the key issues of our time. In reality, connection nodes both anticipated and unanticipated across disciplines are much more common than students realize or understand. Critical thinking, holistic problem solving, and integration are some of the benefits of an intentional interdisciplinary pedagogy and awareness.

### **University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) - Institutional Background**

As noted in the 2015 - 2025 Strategic Plan, "The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is located in the verdant Mānoa Valley, in the *ahupua'a* (land division) of Waikīkī, in the *moku* of Kona, on the *mokupuni* of O'ahu, in the *pae'āina* of Hawai'i in the center of *Moananuiākea*" (*Mānoa 2025 - Our Kuleana to Hawai'i & the World - Strategic Plan 2015–2025*, 2020, p.5). UHM is a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning, "a Land-, Sea-, Sun-, and Space Grant research institution," a Research Intensive University that has more than 200 degree granting programs with a very diverse student body. Figure 1., (*Mānoa 2025 - Our Kuleana to Hawai'i & the World - Strategic Plan 2015–2025*, 2020)

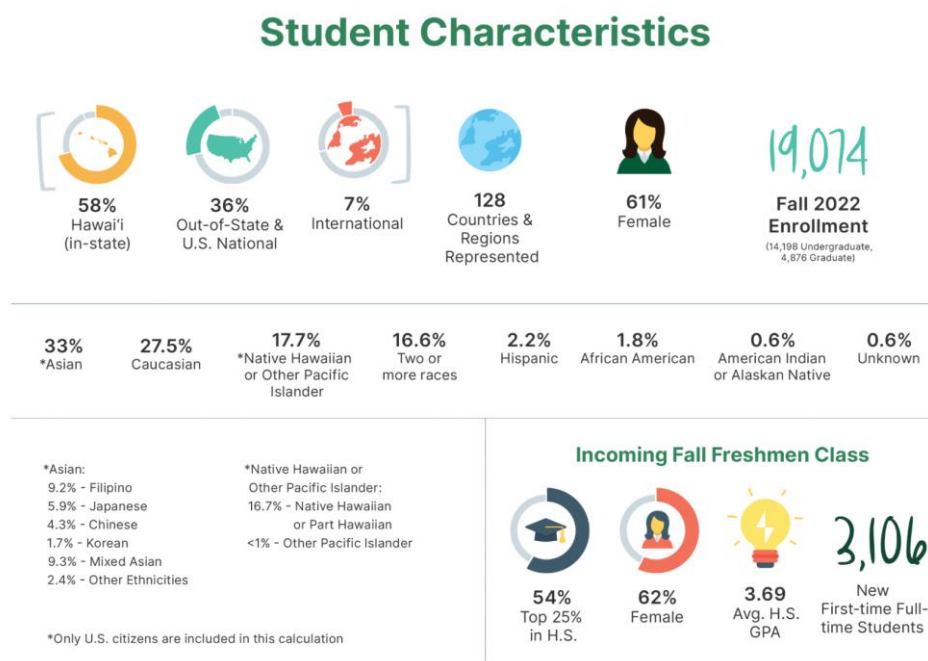


Figure 1: university of Hawai'i at Mānoa student's characteristics

### University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Honors Program (UHM HP) - Background

Established more than 60 years ago, the UHM HP does not use test scores in the admissions process, is committed to serving all students at UHM who wish to apply to be a member of the Honors *hui* (community) and engage in a research pathway. There are approximately 400 plus Honors students enrolled in the Honors Program at any given time with similar diverse characteristics as the UHM student population (20 - 30% of students enrolling from out of state, for example). Honors students avail of smaller classes, personalized advising, mentorship, and faculty guided-projects. Honors students gain a working understanding of the diverse nature of scholarship in the university whilst articulating sound arguments in written and verbal communication and conducting independent scholarly work of professional or near professional quality in the field.

HP students require complex personalized, concrete, and holistic teaching and advising en route to successfully graduating with academic honors at UHM. As Badenhause et al. (2020) note, "Altering the language used to categorize, publicize, and describe honors creates possibilities for welcoming new and increasingly diverse populations of learners by allowing prospective students to 'see' themselves as fitting within an honors community" (Badenhause & Buss, 2020, p. 4).

### Honors Equity Pedagogy - Building a Better World

Students (and everyone) need to feel trust in order to more fully explore, think critically and creatively, and ask questions. Creating connected teaching and advising spaces is critical because students are emboldened when "seen," "acknowledged," and "allowed to fail up" together (Aquila, 2021; Nathoo, 2021). Tinto (2016) notes:

"When it comes to students' belief in their ability to succeed in college, a strong sense of self-efficacy promotes goal attainment, while a weak sense undermines it. Whereas people with high self-efficacy will engage more readily in a task, expend more effort on it and persist longer in its completion even when they encounter

difficulties, persons with low self-efficacy will tend to become discouraged and withdraw when encountering difficulties” (para. 6).

My scholarly and professional work is underpinned by a firm belief in and adherence to the Ethics of Care / Care Ethics and Cultural Humility framework approaches (Foronda, 2020; Gilligan, 2014). Both of these actively acknowledge context, intentionally include all, and contemplate effect, not just cause. Care is equitable, active, engaged, intentional, revolutionary, and transformative. Gilligan (2014) writes:

“The ethics of care starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness or interdependence... An ethics of care directs our attention to the need for responsiveness in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others. Its logic is inductive, contextual, psychological, rather than deductive or mathematical” (para. 4).

### **Foundational and Intersectional Pedagogies - Native Hawaiian Place of Learning**

The University of Hawai‘i is a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning, an established element in the University Strategic Plan. In the newest strategic plan (2020) *aloha ‘āina* (caring for the land) was determined to be a necessary guiding *kuleana* (responsibility) for the university. Like the Irish worldview, the Hawaiian value of caring for and directly connecting to the land is key to interrupting and addressing the serious repercussions of climate change, an issue of concern frequently expressed by Honors students.

As the UHM 2025 Strategic Plan describes:

“Aloha ‘āina is a relationship and worldview deeply rooted in Hawai‘i. It is a recognition, commitment, and practice sustaining the *ea* – or life breath - between people and our natural environments that resulted in nearly 100 generations of sustainable care for Hawai‘i. We recognize it is because of the aloha ‘āina practiced by Native Hawaiians over those many centuries that we can enjoy the Hawai‘i we have today. Therefore, as we continue to learn about our collective *kuleana* as a university truly of Hawai‘i, we realize that we too have a role in aloha ‘āina and we take guidance from Native Hawaiian ancestral knowledge and wisdom on this journey together” (*Mānoa 2025 - Our Kuleana to Hawai‘i & the World - Strategic Plan 2015–2025*, 2020, p.8).

### **UHM Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Center (TRHT)**

Under the leadership and tutelage of Dr. Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu "Punihei" Lipe and the Native Hawaiian Place of Learning Advancement Office at UH Mānoa, TRHT is a comprehensive, national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism. The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa was one of only 10 campuses across Hawai‘i and the U.S. Continent to be awarded funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Newman’s Own to advance Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation. There were 125 college and university applicants. This iterative grounding in Hawaiian epistemology, learning, and participation is ongoing.

### **Co-Curricular Innovation and Implementation - Honors Mentoring Resilience Series**

I created the Honors Mentoring Program Resilience Series to provide an opportunity for connection and dialogue between Honors students and professionals in relevant fields. The Resilience Series is envisioned as a "whole student approach" in terms of building personal resilience along the undergraduate Honors academic pathway. For example, one session was entitled, "Resilience in the Undergraduate Pre-Medical Journey: Hawaiian World View."

Panelists included a medical school student who had experienced a serious setback through the loss of a valuable scholarship direct entry pathway, yet still was accepted to medical school through persistent effort and dedication. One participant shared, in direct response to this panelist's story and encouragement, that, "I felt like this event was literally crafted for me at the perfect time. Nothing has ever resonated with me as deeply as this talk and I am so thankful that Honors puts on events like this!" This student experienced some setbacks as well in the following years, but last year was also accepted to medical school. Both students also took Honors 300 and reported valuable mobile skill acquisition that supports emotional intelligence and resilience.

Panelists offered useful guidance such as:

"See where your skills meet the needs of your community."

"Believe in what makes you happy, and that will lead you through."

"Always reach out for support and help, especially from those who mentor you."

"Contemplate your life path, and know that you always have permission to change direction."

## **2. Methods**

Using an Action Research model of investigating and solving an issue simultaneously to frame and examine, discern, and implement epistemology, situational responsiveness, and cultural awareness in Honors education is implicitly an interdisciplinary endeavor (Calhoun, 1994; Stringer & Ortiz 2020). To accommodate the multilayered profile of the modern Honors student, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary praxis and approaches have the requisite components to embrace specific content knowledge acquisition, context and cultural specificity. The development of the courses and the student evaluation surveys presented in this paper illustrate how an interdisciplinary endeavor such as this can be effective.

My role in this project is teaching and curriculum methodology and praxis, having developed and implemented these three Undergraduate Honors courses since 2015. These courses are an Honors 300 level Experiential Learning & Scholarly Engagement (Writing Intensive, Communication) course, a 100 level Introduction to Research (Writing Intensive), and a 300 level Learn the Publication process course (Ethics, Writing Intensive). Graduation designations are especially helpful and offer academic utility for the large number of STEM majors enrolled in Honors. All courses are and were taught via Canvas, an online course management system, and delivered via Zoom. Each course had Student Learning Objectives and Outcomes. Each course had multiple disciplines represented in the student body such as Social Work, Engineering, Psychology, Biological/Natural Sciences, English, History, and Public Health. (This is not an exhaustive list.)

Each course has common theoretical frameworks that all students studied, assimilated, wrote and presented about, and incorporated into their academic pathway. For example, all students studied Ethical Frameworks in the HON 300 Publication course, all students studied Educational Psychology, Experiential Learning Theory, and Design Thinking in the HON 300 Experiential Learning & Scholarly Engagement, and all students studied the same research methods textbook in HON 100 Introduction to Research.

Each student also applied theories learned and scholarly skills acquired to the specific discipline and pathway, as well as presenting that research and those findings to the whole class with time for Q&A. This could be described as an intentionally designed interdisciplinary “greenhouse” where students operating independently co-developed holistic understanding and increased capacity for synergistic thinking and computation.

For example, an Astrophysics student applied Kolb’s (2009; 2015; 2017) Experiential Learning Theory in the HON 300 level course when examining the perennial issues of knowledge acquisition and high fail rates in STEM courses, especially Physics. And a first year Engineering student undertook applied research in regards to extending battery life, another student studied the issues of invasive species in Hawai’i, and another studied the issue of racism toward Asian people on the U.S. Continent during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

All of these issues related to social, technological, and climate concerns that affected all students in the course in one way or another. All of these issues may intertwine with another discipline or student pathway creating catalytic moments of affective change to address key and complex issues.

#### **Honors 100 Writing Intensive: Introduction to Research and Creative Work at Mānoa**

This course focuses on the type of research that UH Mānoa, a Research One institution, is particularly well-positioned to do as a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning university. This course (20 students maximum per class) has a core central theme shaped by and around the issues of sustainability and climate disruption. One mentoring element is the use of guest speakers in video and also during class time (Honors faculty and students) who model personal research experiences and advice.

This scaffolded iterative revision pedagogy translates in practice to the creation of an educational space wherein all students who enroll and complete this course study research methods, refine and polish formal scholarly writing, craft a research proposal question in their own discipline, present to peers, and submit a final paper, complete with Literature Review. In other words, the scholarly research process is demystified in a concrete and accessible way.

This type of pedagogy and curriculum creates a shared cohort/*hui* (partnership, union, alliance, team) learning space during the semester. This is key to student empowerment, retention, and meaningful connection making for the four-year Honors pathway. Students learn about each other’s majors and disciplines in some detail, and can then perceive and become aware of diverse solutions to perennial and persistent problems approached from STEM, Humanities, and Creative perspectives in real time. This is a powerful co-curated



student engagement connected reflective space where students bond in a variety of ways that may not always be available in other areas of the student academic journey (Boud et al., 2013).

### **Honors 300 level Writing Intensive, Communication**

This course evolved from an Honors Internship course with a one-page syllabus and no Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to a permanent course with a Writing Intensive and Communication focus. I embedded information fluency, enhanced and high-level writing skills, presentations, podcast assignments, intentional scholarly reflection, Educational Psychology and Experiential Learning Theory, and student empowered learning into a real-world learning loop. Students enhance and deepen academic and professional skills, make meaningful reflective connections intrinsically and extrinsically, and then apply the skill acquisition and learning process to future Honors research, professional pursuits, experiences, and contexts. Theories studied include Educational Psychology - Growth Mindset, and cognitive behavioral learning styles such as Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory model (Dweck, 2014; Kolb, 2015; 2017).

### **Honors 300 level, Writing Intensive & Ethics**

The UHM Honors Program publishes the *Horizons* Undergraduate Research Journal, with both digital/online and print versions. Grounded in Native Hawaiian and Irish worldview social constructivist principles such as connectedness, open minded listening, and interaction, this rigorous course on the publication process offers concretized experiential learning within a framework of ethical theories and approaches.

The course is designed to provide students with first-hand experience in publishing from multiple perspectives: working with content submitters from various disciplines as part of the Student Editorial Board and team, reviewer, and publisher. This type of professional environment in an academic setting guided by a faculty and with a rich curriculum sets up in real time an interactive and collaborative group dynamic and ethos.

This course satisfies two university graduation focus requirements (Writing Intensive & Ethics), as well as a credit-based incentive to engage in place-based learning and professional skill acquisition.

### **Data Collection**

To assess courses (and in this case the student experience of connection with other student scholars in a *hui* - community), and with consent, at the end of the course, students were invited to voluntarily and anonymously fill out an evaluation survey. Evaluations are part of each course taught at the institution, and students can opt in anonymously, or not. Questions incorporated a pre and post self assessment model in the HON 100 level course. Students also provided feedback in their final essays, as well as in unsolicited emails and other communications expressing experiences with the course. Some of this data is presented below, and evaluation survey results are discussed below.

### 3. Results

These courses facilitated Honors student connection as seen by the anonymous evaluation results. Bridging and connections are powerful tools for student retention and success and an important measure of effective curriculum outcomes (Driscoll et al., 2021).

For example, when asked “Did Honors 100 help you create connections with your Honors cohort and the Honors Program?” 83% of students felt they did create connections, 6% felt somewhat of a connection, and 11% felt they did not (N=66). 89%, a majority, felt that they did or somewhat created connections.

A thematic analysis of qualitative survey responses resulted in themes such as “connection,” “member,” and “canvas” (the online class platform). Divergent perspectives expressed in the minority expressed a lack of connection made, but provided no clarification.

#### **Qualitative Response Examples:**

“YES, I made a connection with a member of the Honors Program, my professor, and this course allowed me to form a relationship with her through zoom, and canvas. I also was able to meet members of the Honors Cohort in this class, and it was nice to know that there were other kids who may not have that much experience in research, similar to me. I was able to make these connections through deep discussions, and collaborative assignments on canvas.”

“We were all able to communicate outside of class when we needed help, and then in class I could feel the support I had from everyone because we're all in the same boat.”

Students of the Honors 300 level course were asked “Did you enjoy learning from your classmates about their discipline, methods, experiences, and reflections?”

89% reported that they felt they learned from their classmates, 2% felt they learned somewhat, and 9% felt they did not. The majority, 91%, of students felt they learned from their classmates (N=54). A thematic analysis of qualitative responses about the class resulted in themes such as new insights and perspectives, and learning about differences.

#### **Qualitative Response Examples:**

“My classmates provided great insight and thoughts based on other academic journeys and helped to expand personal views and mindsets.”

“Learning about everyone’s own passion for their major, career path, and engagement activities gave me motivation to dive deeper into why I have passion for my own. It inspires me to keep reaching for opportunities even when it seems impossible.”

“I saw different perspectives through the lesson plans and Perusall and Vialogue comments. The lesson plan assignment also gave me a sense of how other individuals from other disciplines think. This exposed to me the difference in how people learn and what people enjoy learning about. This helps to broaden my perspective as I go about communicating with other individuals.”

“This class as a whole has let me connect with my undergraduate peers in a way I had never before. It is the first time I have had a community like this.”

“I connected a lot with my classmates. They were a pleasure to work with and I hope we all remain friends and/or acquaintances.”

Qualitative responses about the podcast assignment resulted in themes such as positive experiences of making new friends, group and team work.

**Qualitative Team Podcast Experience Response Examples:**

“I've never had to do a podcast recording before in my life, so it was really good to go through this experience with other people..., and actually make some new friends along the way. We ended up working very well together and doing lots of meetings both for the podcast and helping each other in general as peers in this class, so it was great to see that teamwork.”

“The podcast taught me how important it is to stay motivated and fully invested in work even when in a remote environment. This was the longest project I have ever been a part of for a class and essential time management skills and organization was required. Also, even just 4 people can complete some pretty amazing work. Creating an entire podcast seemed like a huge task at the beginning of the semester but now sitting on the day it is due and looking back on all the drafts, meetings, discussion and frustrations that occurred throughout the length of this project, it is incredibly special to be able to say we actually did it.”

When students of the Honors 300 level Writing Intensive & Ethics (Spring, 2023) were asked, “Did Honors 300 Writing Intensive & Ethics help you create connections with the UHM undergraduate community?” 67% felt the course helped them create connections, 11% felt they created connections somewhat, and 22% felt they did not (N=9). The majority, 88%, of the students felt the course helped them create connections. A thematic analysis of qualitative responses resulted in themes such as making new connections and friends.

#### **4. Discussion**

Teaching in Honors is inherently multi-dimensional, always making room to intentionally craft and enrich cultural and disciplinary exchange across subjects and foci. Applied interdisciplinary pedagogy prepares students to concretely engage with complex global challenges. There are specific approaches to embedding Cultural Humility awareness in Honors pedagogy and praxis. Diversity of experience needs to be forefronted, welcomed, and celebrated. Students enrolled together in Honors classes are not “automatically” connected or connecting either to the material or to one another. Results show that connection is a mixture of doses of good humor, patience, planning, and dynamic flexibility.

A successful instructor must be comfortable with a wide range of student personality styles, circumstances, cultures, contexts, and perspectives. Respect, honesty, and clarity are vital. Often, one has to deftly jump from content matter specificity to classroom management of

one form or another to empowerment teaching models within the space of a few minutes in the complex and sophisticated ecosystem of the student academic life-cycle. As Flaherty (2020) notes, “What makes for successful advising? Listening, respect and caring...” (Flaherty, 2020, para. 1). This applies equally to teaching.

Yet with heavy teaching and advising workloads, balance and care can easily go by the wayside. The Ethics of Care (Delworth & Seeman, 1984; Fuglsang & Mattsson, 2009; Govrin, 2014) and Cultural Humility (Danso, 2016; Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013) can be essential frameworks in which to successfully deliver whole student holistic teaching and advising (Appleby, 2008; Grites, 2013). As Fisher-Borne et al. (2015) pointed out, other client centered disciplines, such as public health, medicine, nursing, and social work, “consider cultural competency a standard of care within their educational objectives...” (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015, p.168).

## 5. Conclusions

Building and crafting a connective rigorous curriculum rooted in Irish and Hawaiian cultural worldviews through a “two island cultures lens” via an online pedagogy builds bridges, connection, resilience and results in powerfully positive transformation. This can be seen as a form of socio-emotional learning (SEL) in the University classroom. As Schu notes (2021) SEL “...leads to stronger relationships, a sense of belonging, and a more supportive learning environment, setting the stage for academic learning” (Paterson, 2021, para. 9). To achieve equity in a complex world, educators need to stay attuned to student needs, and while student development and circumstance may share themes and similar patterns, students and people in general differ which necessitates the employment of an Ethics of Care and Cultural Humility model as a roadmap for meaningful context. Results show that building connections can be powerfully applied to Honors curriculum, teaching, advising, talent development, resilience and empowerment around the world to support talent. This work is applicable to all teaching environments as genuine connection has a positive ripple change agent effect.

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