

COMMUNITY CONSULTANCY: A MODEL FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

AN INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A major component of the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa EdD program, the consultancy project allows graduate students to work in groups with the guidance of faculty, to develop potential solutions to challenges posed by community organizations or K-12 schools. This authentic project allows practitioner-students to wrestle with some of the most pressing educational problems in our state, to transform their perspectives and professional approaches through their learning. The consultancy project echos the rigor of a dissertation in terms of literature review, methodology, and findings. In addition, it is allotted an equal number of credit hours within the EdD program.

This presentation tells the story of one consultancy group who were transformed by answering the call of 4 unique community-based organizations, who serve students and families with ties to the Micronesian diaspora. The students conducted a feasibility study for establishing a Micronesian culture-based charter school or other educational program because Micronesian students, their families, and K-12 school staff have struggled to build bridges between diverse Micronesian cultures and the local Hawai'i context. Similar struggles have been documented in other Micronesian diaspora communities, including Enid, Oklahoma, Springdale, Arkansas, and Springfield, Missouri. By any measure, our schools are failing these children academically, socially, and emotionally. A transformation is needed: both for the students and for their teachers. This project demonstrates how the transformation can begin with students within the university context and extend to the K-12 and community setting.

Five UH-Mānoa EdD students conducted 5 statewide focus groups about Micronesian cultural values, the aspirations of Micronesian parents for their children's futures, and how these families would like their children to be educated. Come, hear the voices of Marshallese, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Palauan, Kosraen, and Yapese parents. They share optimism, pain, confusion, frustration, and pride. Our discussion might challenge the audience's prejudices and affirm their idealistic educational philosophies by transforming their perspectives as they work with diverse students.

The presenters will focus on the potential for collaborative community research to serve as a method of transformative learning for graduate students, and how it can be tailored to high school and undergraduate courses. In addition, they will share concrete ways universities can serve as a connection point for diverse community groups trying to address complex educational challenges.

To ensure audience take-aways, they will facilitate a discussion about what challenges from their own communities might benefit from a project like this and how their educational institutions could serve as the local connection point. Presenters will share program narratives and relevant templates for setting up a community consultancy in their own schools.

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