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WEST O'AHU

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UH WEST O'AHU HOKULE'A FIELD STUDY TEACHES STUDENTS REAL-WORLD MATHEMATICS APPLICATIONS

PEARL CITY --- UH West O'ahu (UHWO) students and their Math Center tutors recently embarked on a field study at Sand Island on the internationally renowned sailing vessel, the Hokule'a. While sanding surfaces and varnishing rails, students learned about the mathematical calculations for voyages aboard the famous canoe from Ka'iulani Murphy, Polynesian Voyaging Society navigator. During the field study, Murphy discussed the interconnectivity of math and ancient pathways based on celestial navigation.

"I didn't realize how much math had to be factored into going on a voyage," said UHWO student Mhoana Bello. "The amount of supplies, the dimensions of each canoe, and distance and travel time all had to be factored in. It was interesting to learn about the historical aspects of the voyage and also how it relates to math in terms of what exact proportions of each material had to be put into making the canoe in order to better the voyage."

This spring, UH West O'ahu opened a new undergraduate Math Center where student math tutors and tutees work together on real-world mathematics applications in addition to traditional class assignments. Funded by the Islands of Opportunity Alliance-Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (IOA-LSAMP) program, the Math Center enhances the student experience at UH West O'ahu through a culturally-sensitive mathematics curriculum, and combines academic mentoring with personalized tutoring.

"One of the concepts I stress in class is ethnomathematics, or the connection of math to sociocultural, linguistic and historical traditions," says UHWO Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Linda Furuto. "While it is very important to learn about textbook mathematics, it is equally critical to understand that there were great mathematicians that emerged from Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands, including the students' ancestors."

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This Fall, UH West O'ahu became a four-year, comprehensive university when it served its first class of freshmen. The University offers quality education, small classes and personalized attention at convenient locations. A new campus in the City of Kapolei is scheduled to serve students in Spring 2010. For more information about UH West O'ahu, visit uhwo.hawaii.edu or call (808) 454-4700 or toll free (866) 299-8656.

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