

MEDICAL SCHOOL HOTLINE

Celebrating 40 years of 'Imi Ho'ōla

Winona K. Lee MD; Malia-Susanne Lee MD; and Dee-Ann Carpenter MD

The Medical School Hotline is a monthly column from the John A. Burns School of Medicine and is edited by Satoru Izutsu PhD; HJMPH Contributing Editor. Dr. Izutsu is the vice-dean of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine and has been the Medical School Hotline editor since 1993.

JABSOM's Commitment to Student Diversity

The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) was established in 1967 as a 2-year pre-clinical program, requiring students to complete their last two clinical years of medical education on the continental United States. Six years later, JABSOM became a 4-year medical degree granting institution and established itself as the first and only US accredited medical school in the Pacific basin. JABSOM's longstanding commitment to student diversity, particularly Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander representation in medicine, began with its first Dean, Dr. Windsor Cutting. Dr. Cutting's vision produced the Dean's Guest program which later became *Kulia* (Hawaiian meaning for "to strive").¹ The Dean's Guest and *Kulia* programs offered faculty tutoring to disadvantaged students primarily from the Pacific and an additional year to complete the 2-year preclinical medical program. Students who excelled in the Dean's guest program were presented to the executive committee with recommendations to advance as a full time medical student. Historically, these programs set the foundation necessary to garner support to create the highly successful educational model now known as the 'Imi Ho'ōla Post-Baccalaureate Program. The 'Imi Ho'ōla program is institutionalized within JABSOM and is part of the Department of Native Hawaiian Health.² This article describes the evolution of 'Imi Ho'ōla, its current educational curriculum, community partnerships and supporters, the program's 40th anniversary celebration, and alumni outcomes.

Evolution of 'Imi Ho'ōla

In 1973, the 'Imi Ho'ōla (Hawaiian meaning for "those who seek to heal") Program was formed under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Young. 'Imi Ho'ōla was originally created to increase Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian representation in medical school by increasing their competitiveness to successfully gain admission and graduate from JABSOM. The program's mission continues to focus on improving health care for Hawai'i and the Pacific by increasing the number of physicians through a one year enrichment program. An Advisory Committee, comprised of community leaders in education, medicine, and business was established to review prospective candidates, conduct interviews and select students for the program. In the first two decades of the program's history (1973-1994), 'Imi Ho'ōla focused on premedical enrichment for students preparing to

apply to medical school. Up to 25 students were accepted into each class and upon completion, students would competitively apply for entrance into JABSOM.

Beginning with the 1996-1997 class, 'Imi Ho'ōla underwent a significant organizational transformation and became a post-baccalaureate program due to federal funding priorities. The transformation was overseen by immediate past Director, Dr. Nanette Judd. The program would now accept up to 10 students each year and once enrolled in the program, students gained a conditional acceptance to JABSOM. In 2010, JABSOM's Dean Jerris Hedges increased the 'Imi Ho'ōla enrollment to 12 students per class. Students from economically, socially, and/or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds who possess the potential to succeed in medicine are eligible to apply.³ A Community Advisory Board continues to guide the program in selecting the most qualified candidates for the program. Once students meet *Kama'aina* (having state of Hawai'i ties), academic, and disadvantaged screening requirements, they are reviewed by the Advisory Board members and selected for consideration. Students are prioritized based on their academic and professional potential as well as their commitment to serve in underserved communities of Hawai'i and the Pacific. The recommendations made by the Advisory Board are then forwarded to the JABSOM Admissions Committee who makes the final selection of the students who gain entrance to the 'Imi Ho'ōla Post-Baccalaureate Program. Upon successful completion of the program, students matriculate into JABSOM as first year medical students.

Current Educational Curriculum

'Imi Ho'ōla's curriculum and teaching philosophy is student-centered, supporting an individual student's academic and professional development. The current curriculum emphasizes the integration of concepts in the sciences and humanities and further develops students' communication, critical thinking, and learning skills. Students complete a series of assessments that are used to determine the students' current level of learning skills development and approach to mastering new information. The information obtained by the learning assessments are analyzed and used to create an individualized educational plan for each student. This comprehensive educational plan is used throughout the year to provide feedback and develop strategies

for each student to achieve success in the program. The program faculty meets with each student six (6) times throughout the year. During these student conferences, students receive formal feedback regarding their performance in the program. Feedback regarding students' professional behaviors is also incorporated into the educational plan.

Each semester, students are enrolled in 3 core courses — Medical Biology, Medical Biochemistry, and the Scientific Basis of Medicine. Medical Biology and Medical Biochemistry develop the students' knowledge and understanding of the basic sciences while enhancing their problem solving and critical thinking skills. The Scientific Basis of Medicine Course introduces students to a global view of health and disease and provides a forum to discuss the epidemiological and psychosocial aspects of disease on a local, national, and international level. Classes are taught using the problem-based learning method (small group, student-driven, and tutor facilitated learning process) and didactic lectures. Students also gain team building and leadership skills through experiential learning opportunities such as the Kalaupapa Service Learning project and physician shadowing in rural and underserved communities of Hawai'i.

Community Partnerships and Supporters

'Imi Ho'ōla's success is made possible through the ongoing support of community partners and contributors to the program. Since 2002, the Queen's Health System has directly contributed funding for 'Imi Ho'ōla student stipends. Students receive a monthly stipend that helps defray the cost of tuition, books, and living expenses. This generous and vital financial support allows students to focus on their studies and is critical to their successful completion of the program.

In 1999, the Friends of 'Imi Ho'ōla was established as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The Friends of 'Imi Ho'ōla began as a grassroots effort to provide on-going support for students in the program. It became apparent to program alumni and faculty that mentoring students was an important component to sustaining student motivation and inspiration to succeed in the rigorous program. The group's purpose is to provide support and independent funding to assist the 'Imi Ho'ōla program and its students in carrying out their goals and activities. Dr. Dee-Ann Carpenter, 'Imi alumna and founding President, is still part of the Board of Directors today. Friends of 'Imi continues to grow and support the program with financial support, time, and energy. Since its inception, the funding from Friends of 'Imi has supported students' educational materials and the annual 'Imi Ho'ōla completion ceremony. With donations from alumni, friends, and community supporters, Friends of 'Imi Ho'ōla created the Friends of 'Imi Ho'ōla Tuition Assistance Award (FIHTA) in 2010. Friends of 'Imi Ho'ōla continues this tradition each year and has awarded \$27,000 in FIHTA support. Also, individual donors, through the University of Hawai'i Foundation, support student and program activities throughout the year.

40th Anniversary Celebration

The 'Imi Ho'ōla 40th anniversary celebration was held on July 26, 2013. The evening speakers included the Honorable Judge James Burns who eloquently described how the 'Imi Ho'ōla program continues to keep the dream of his father, the late Governor of Hawai'i, John A. Burns, alive by providing opportunities in higher education for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. Dean Jerris Hedges and former program leaders Drs. Ben Young and Nanette Judd also contributed to the celebration by reflecting on the impact that 'Imi Ho'ōla has had on the medical school and the community. The event also honored Dr. Rahki Ram (Dean's guest and JABSOM alumnus) and his wife MaryAnn for their outstanding philanthropy in establishing the Tarsavi Wati and Ishwar Dass 'Imi Ho'ōla Program Endowment. Support from the endowment will benefit current 'Imi Ho'ōla students as well as graduates of the program. A highlight of the evening took place when Dr. Amy Agbayani presented the program with a formal recognition and announcement from Governor Abercrombie proclaiming July 26, 2013 as 'Imi Ho'ōla day.

Alumni Outcomes

To date, 234 'Imi Ho'ōla alumni have successfully graduated from JABSOM. Of these graduates, 38% are Native Hawaiian, 24% are Filipino, and 18% are other Pacific Islanders (ie, Samoan, Palauan, Marshallese, Yapese, Pohnpeian, Kosraen). Of the 234 'Imi Ho'ōla graduates, 85% are providing primary care services and at least 80% of the physicians are practicing medicine in underserved communities where they are needed most. As the 'Imi Ho'ōla Post-Baccalaureate Program celebrates its 40th Anniversary, we look positively to the future as 'Imi Ho'ōla continues to produce physicians and health care leaders that impact the health of our patients, families, and communities.

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Authors' Affiliation:

- Department of Native Hawaiian Health; John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, HI

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