

Kapi'olani Community College: Answering the Challenge of an Aging Society

By *Kenneth A. Knapp, Ph.D.*

Introduction

In this Caregiving Brief, we highlight the caregiver training program developed by Kapi'olani Community College, winner of a 2008 grant under the Community College Caregiver Training Initiative.

With support from MetLife Foundation, the International Longevity Center established the Community College Caregiver Training Initiative (CTI) in 2007 as a feature of the Caregiving Project for Older Americans. The goal of the CTI is to encourage the expansion of caregiver training programs for both family caregivers and in-home care workers among community colleges throughout the United States. Twenty-four geographically dispersed community colleges have been awarded grants of up to \$25,000 under the CTI to date, representing a wide variety of content and approaches.

Kapi'olani Community College

One of seven community colleges within the University of Hawaii system, Kapi'olani Community College is based in Honolulu, with an enrollment of 7,000 matriculated students and with 25,000 students annually attending continuing education programs.

With CTI funding, Kapi'olani has developed an ambitious, multifaceted program that expands its gerontology program by offering entry-level paraprofessional training through the Kupuna Education Center, the first and only community-college based gerontology center in Hawaii. Nowhere else in the state is training provided for entry-level in-home care workers (called "Elder Pals" by Kapi'olani). Training and information services for family caregivers have also started.

Kapi'olani's home care training program is part of an overall four-pronged strategic plan meant to address the needs of Hawaii's aging population:

1. Provide training for paraprofessionals;
2. Provide training and information to family caregivers and to the general public;
3. Implement "active aging" programs such providing information on nutrition, fitness, finances; and
4. Develop close working relationships with six other community colleges within the University of Hawaii system to address aging issues.

Kapi'olani has adopted a curriculum based upon that developed by the Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education. Three tiers of training are being offered, each building upon the preceding level, for a total of 100 hours of training.

We recently spoke with Cullen Hayashida, Ph.D. and Toni Hathaway, MSW about their program.¹ According to them, the establishment of the CTI caregiver training and gerontology program at the college's Kupuna² Education Center was motivated largely to answer

the challenge of an aging society. Excerpts of our conversation follow.

Could you talk a little bit about your program and how it got started?

Cullen: Very soon after we were informed about the [CTI] grant award, I arranged to have Toni and another nurse instructor, Penny Hill, visit the Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education in Arkansas. They spent a week there learning about Schmieding's truly wonderful program. They brought back with them the Schmieding curriculum and we started with a commitment to get started with the training. The course has three tiers: the Elder Pal, which is 25 hours, followed by another 25 hours for a Personal Care Assistant, then a third level, which is another 50 hours for the Homecare Assistant. We just completed Level 1 and have now started a Level II (Personal Care Assistant) class.

Toni: There were 10 people in our first Elder Pal class, a very diverse group—Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Caucasian—this is pretty typical here in Hawaii. A couple of people who speak a second language, too, which is very helpful with elder care because for many of them [the care recipients], their primary language is not necessarily English. It was actually a pretty well-educated group, which was a little surprising to me. Almost everybody had some college experience already, and several people had Bachelor's degrees. We even had a couple of people who had their MSW because one was going to be opening an adult day care center and she wanted some training. And the other is specializing in gerontology as well as helping to take care of her mother.

What are the ages of your students? Are they men, women?

Toni: The ages were between 23 and 61, with most of them being in their 40s and 50s. All were women except for one. We had one man who came in with his daughter—they both took the training. They were going to be taking care of his mother, who was going to require more and more care over time, so they were definitely preparing to do that. The daughter has an MSW in gerontology, so she had a big interest in elders and aging, but her dad

didn't have a background in that at all. So I think that he really learned a lot about how to communicate better with his mother, how to treat her in a different way than he had thought about before.

It sounds like the daughter may have motivated him.

Toni: I think so! Yeah, definitely.

Were the students mostly family caregivers?

Toni: I think the thing that was pretty common to all of them is that they started out with an interest because of family caregiving, and they were preparing to do more family caregiving. But some of them also have an interest in doing it in the future as a paid worker. I think the thing that struck me is that it was a fairly well-educated group and they are very dedicated. They are really wanting to take care of elders, not just thinking, "Oh this would be a good way to make some money."

What's unique about your caregiver training?

Cullen: Well, we wanted to provide different types of training paraprofessionals as well as for family members in caregiving. We are also working with the other departments within the college to sort of infuse our entire college with more of a gerontological theme. For example, we work with the culinary department here, and we are trying to suggest to them that perhaps they should incorporate within their curriculum a little bit of gerontology, because many of the students that will be leaving will not just become master chefs, but many of them might also be able to find opportunities in assisted living facilities and places serving seniors. And we think that many of their clientele will probably be older adults. We want to teach them about this older adult population and somehow change the curriculum of the existing culinary arts program as well as our health sciences, our nursing and so on. We are doing some of that through this whole paraprofessional training part of our gerontology program.

You are building this training program as part of the overall effort to build a gerontology center. Can you talk about that?

Cullen: We were provided with funds from the state legislature a couple of years ago to start a gerontology

¹ Dr. Hayashida is Director of the CTI training program, Long-term Care Development Coordinator and Asst. Professor; Ms. Hathaway is a CTI instructor and Education Coordinator at Kapi'olani's Kupuna Education Center. Visit www.kupunaeducation.com for more information about the Kupuna Education Center.

² According to Dr. Hayashida, kupuna is Hawaiian for elder. "We took some time to decide on this word and worked closely with our Hawaiian language department specialists to help craft the 'meaning of kupuna' in our website," said Dr. Hayashida.

program at the community college—and we were very fortunate that this is all before the economic downturn. Our strategy has four parts, the caregiver training being one important part.

The second piece of what we are doing focuses on family caregiver training, which includes such things as a television program that airs through our university channel that provides some basic tips about dos and don'ts about caregiving. As part of this, we also just started a feature article series in a local newspaper on family caregiving. The third piece has to do with active aging, which we are still developing. Because of the growth of the senior population and its needs, we don't think that we can provide the community with a sufficient supply of paraprofessional workers and that's part of the reason why we look at family caregiving as a defensive backstop. But even with family caregiver training we think that we will probably not be able to fully meet the needs of the community and that's why we have the third piece on active aging. We need to work with seniors to make them aware that they are going to assume some degree of responsibility in taking good care of themselves, to look at fitness as multidimensional not only in terms of physical fitness but in terms of financial fitness, nutritional fitness, and social fitness—that is, giving back to society. We hope that if we can encourage the other community colleges in Hawaii to also do the same perhaps we may be able to moderate the need for long-term care down the road.

And this brings me to the fourth piece that we want to work on, which will come over time. This will be to try to work very closely with six other community colleges within the University of Hawaii system and to identify a person for each college and see whether or not we can work together basically to meet this growing aging Tsunami that's occurring right now.

What else should we know about your program?

Cullen: One of the things I should mention is that in Hawaii, the CNA [certified nurse assistant] class is basically very much driven by Medicare and Medicare, and that makes it an institutionally-oriented, nursing home oriented program. The Schmieding model that we've adopted focuses on home-based, community-based care. But the problem is we don't have the state approval that these certified CNA classes have. We want to do a curriculum analysis so that we can then show the health department that our curriculum is, in fact, comparable

or equivalent to the present state-certified CNA class that is nursing-home oriented, and we want the state to certify our class as equivalent and acceptable.

Would you agree that one of the biggest challenges for someone with a strict CNA background is that they aren't prepared to work unsupervised in someone's home?

Toni: Right! It's a completely different environment. That's why we wanted to establish this program because as a homecare worker you are not supervised, you need to know how to go into somebody's home, how to handle yourself, some of the ethical and legal things are a little different—you are going to work one-on-one with an elder. You have to know how to talk to the family. There are still some real differences and you are by yourself. There's nobody watching you all the time.

Afterword

By fostering the development of caregiver training programs among community colleges throughout the country, the Caregiver Training Initiative is improving access to quality in-home care. Today, quality care can be extremely difficult to find.

The aging population, great preference for in-home services among those who need care, and the needs of family caregivers all factored into the design of the CTI—the programs developed by Kapi'olani and the other participating community colleges address these concerns in a variety of ways. The 24 winning community colleges have implemented a variety of innovative practices, serve a diverse group of students, and offer a wide variety of content, hours of training, and method of training.

The CTI was established in the context of a growing caregiving crisis in the United States, which only has been exacerbated by today's dire economic environment. More than ever, people who need quality care in their homes face difficulty finding it, and families who often provide care face greater challenges in balancing work and home responsibilities. Expansion of caregiver training programs such as the one developed by Kapi'olani Community College will help society answer this challenge.

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The Caregiving Project for Older Americans is an action-oriented collaboration that aims to improve the nation's caregiving workforce through training, the establishment of standards, and the creation of a career ladder. Bolstering support for family caregivers is another major goal of the project. A joint venture of the International Longevity Center-USA (ILC-USA) and the Schmieding Center for Senior Health & Education (SCSHE), the effort combines the talents of a policy research center with a clinical outpatient and health education program.

The Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education of Northwest Arkansas, located in Springdale, Arkansas, provides older adults and their families with education, health care, information resources and other services for more positive aging. Education services include unique in-home caregiver training programs, public programs on positive aging, and professional programs to improve the geriatric expertise of health care professionals and students. Health care services include comprehensive clinical care and rehabilitation by an interdisciplinary team of geriatric professionals. The Schmieding Center is a partnership of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, the Area Health Education Center-Northwest, and Northwest Health System.

The International Longevity Center-USA is a non-profit, non-partisan research, education, and policy organization whose mission is to help individuals and societies address longevity and population aging in positive and productive ways, and to highlight older peoples' productivity and contributions to their families and society as a whole. The organization is a part of a multinational research and education consortium, which includes centers in the United States, Japan, Great Britain, France, the Dominican Republic, India, South America, Argentina, the Netherlands and Israel. These centers work both autonomously and collaboratively to study how greater life expectancy and increased proportions of older people impact nations around the world.



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