Windward Community College receives $1.2M grant for enrollment program

Mar 9, 2020, 11:31am HST

Windward Community College has received more than $1.2 million to expand and enhance its Paipai O Ko'olau program to increase college enrollment and graduation rates, the school announced Sunday.

Back in 2013, the Harold K. L. Castle Foundation seeded the program with $922,815 and, based on the impact the program has had thus far, the foundation has decided to donate a second round of funding to the tune of $1,286,092 to improve the program and increase its reach over the next five years.

From 2013 to 2019, Paipai O Ko'olau has financially supported 316 students, 78% of whom are Native Hawaiian and more than 95% of whom come from low-income families.

“Through Paipai O Ko'olau we really see this as changing the lives and trajectory for not only the individuals, but families,” said Georgianna DeCosta, Harold K. L. Castle Foundation Windward program officer, in a video statement.

In addition to financial aid, the program provides counseling and support to students who are residents of Windward Oahu and have demonstrated a level of financial need that creates a barrier to entering college. According to WCC officials, priority for the program is given to students who have never attended college — or have other needs that affect their ability to do so — and have strong recommendations from community partners, among other considerations.

In total, students that have gone through the program have earned 123 degrees, including 11 bachelor’s and two master’s, and have graduation and transfer rates that are higher than those of the general student population.

“It’s amazing to see their journey and help so many individuals that maybe don’t think college is possible,” said Paipai O Ko'olau Program Director Sarah Akina in a video statement.

Olivia Peterkin
Web Editor
Pacific Business News