

# KS partners with KCC on Project Olonā

By Shaun Chillingworth  
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Kamehameha Schools has awarded Kapi‘olani Community College \$50,000 to fund a new program called Project Olonā. The project will engage 12 Native Hawaiian students in the comparison of plant growth rates using traditional soil and hydroponic systems.

First-year college students will apply hands-on research to identify the active ingredients of Hawaiian medicinal plants and to compare the difference in the chemical potency of these plants when grown using different methods. Students will also discover and be able to validate potential healing properties of traditional medicinal plants through their knowledge of chemistry.

Keolani Noa, outreach coordinator of the Kapi‘olani CC science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Program said, “We are very excited about this innovative collaboration between Kamehameha’s Extension Education Services Division and STEM program.” Noa continued, “Project Olonā will help students enhance their knowledge about Hawaiian culture and science and help them link traditional Hawaiian practices to contemporary science. This program is poised to increase interest and preparedness of Native Hawaiians for STEM-related professions.”

who will lead the program and provide them with the scientific Students will have the opportunity to work alongside experts in the fields of ethnobotany and chemistry, skills and knowledge needed to successfully conduct the experiments.

“Experiences like these are critical to linking students learning in the classroom to relevant and real world applications,” said **Stacy Clayton**, director of Extension Education Services at Kamehameha Schools. She continued, “What makes Project Olonā special is the Hawaiian world view in which these undergraduate students will conduct their scientific work and inquiry. Their findings will greatly contribute to the scientific Hawaiian body of knowledge.” Clayton continued, “Kamehameha Schools is excited to partner with Kapi‘olani Community College, a leader in STEM education to address persistence concerns by fueling students’ passions for the sciences with culturally rich learning opportunities. I have no doubt that as a result of Project Olonā students will inspire new ideas and innovations, develop essential workforce readiness skills, and maybe create future industries and jobs that may not even exist yet.”

Kapi‘olani CC Chancellor Leon Richards stated, “Through this project Native Hawaiian students will be given the opportunity to find their place and role in the ‘āina in which they live and relate their cultural knowledge and experience to rigorous scientific investigations.” Richards continued, “This program

supports KCC’s broader mission of preparing students for lives of critical inquiry and effective engagement and leadership in careers which strengthen the health, well-being, and vitality of all. We are most grateful to Kamehameha Schools for their vision and generosity.”

*For more information, contact the KCC STEM Center at (808) 734-9236. Mahalo to Extension Education Services division director Stacy Clayton for sharing this information.*

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Stacy Clayton, KS director of Extension Education Services



Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) program coordinator Keolani Noa, STEM student Kala’e Mandrona, KS Director of Extension Education Services Stacy Clayton, STEM student Kimberley Kahale Ua, and STEM student Andrew Chang gather at a Project Olonā event.



KS EES Director Stacy Clayton (center) gets a look at the KCC STEM summer bridge program on its first day.