

# A Demonstration of Capacity Building in Evaluation via Distance Learning for the United States-Affiliated Pacific: A Master's Degree Program in Evaluation

By

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Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa, received funds to develop a master's degree curriculum in evaluation, with the goal to improve educational programs in the Pacific region. With the benefit of this grant, we are developing a course of study specifically designed to meet the unique needs of participants in our region. This paper presents the plan for providing this instruction via distance learning.

## STATEMENT OF NEED

The need for building the capacity of evaluators in the Pacific is evidenced by the region's geographic, economic, cultural, and educational challenges, as described below.

### Geographic Challenges

The first major challenge to evaluation capacity building in the Pacific is its sheer size and diversity. The Pacific region is geographically vast and diverse, spread across 4.9 million square miles of ocean, islands, and atolls. In comparison, the entire continental U.S. is 3.1 million square miles. Many outlying areas are remote and not easily accessible. Within many entities, outer island communities can be reached only by supply ship, where the interval between visits may be 30–45 days. A map of the Pacific islands (see Figure 1) shows the relative distance and size of the region.

The Pacific region served by PREL includes 10 U.S.-affiliated entities with the political statuses of state, commonwealth, territory, or independent nation in a compact of free association with the U.S. These entities include: Hawai'i; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); American Samoa; Guam; the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), including the states of Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap; the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI); and the Republic of Palau.

The region's primary university is the UH. Located in Honolulu, the main Mānoa campus of the UH is approximately 5 hours by air from both the continental U.S. and American Samoa, and 7.5 hours by air from Guam. The westernmost entity in the region is the Republic of Palau, located just 2 hours east of the Philippines. Cultural norms favor close proximity to one's family and village community, resulting in an inability and/or unwillingness to travel for higher education.

- Distance education provides capacity building opportunities in the region that are otherwise not possible, providing services that cross six time zones, the International Date Line, and the equator.

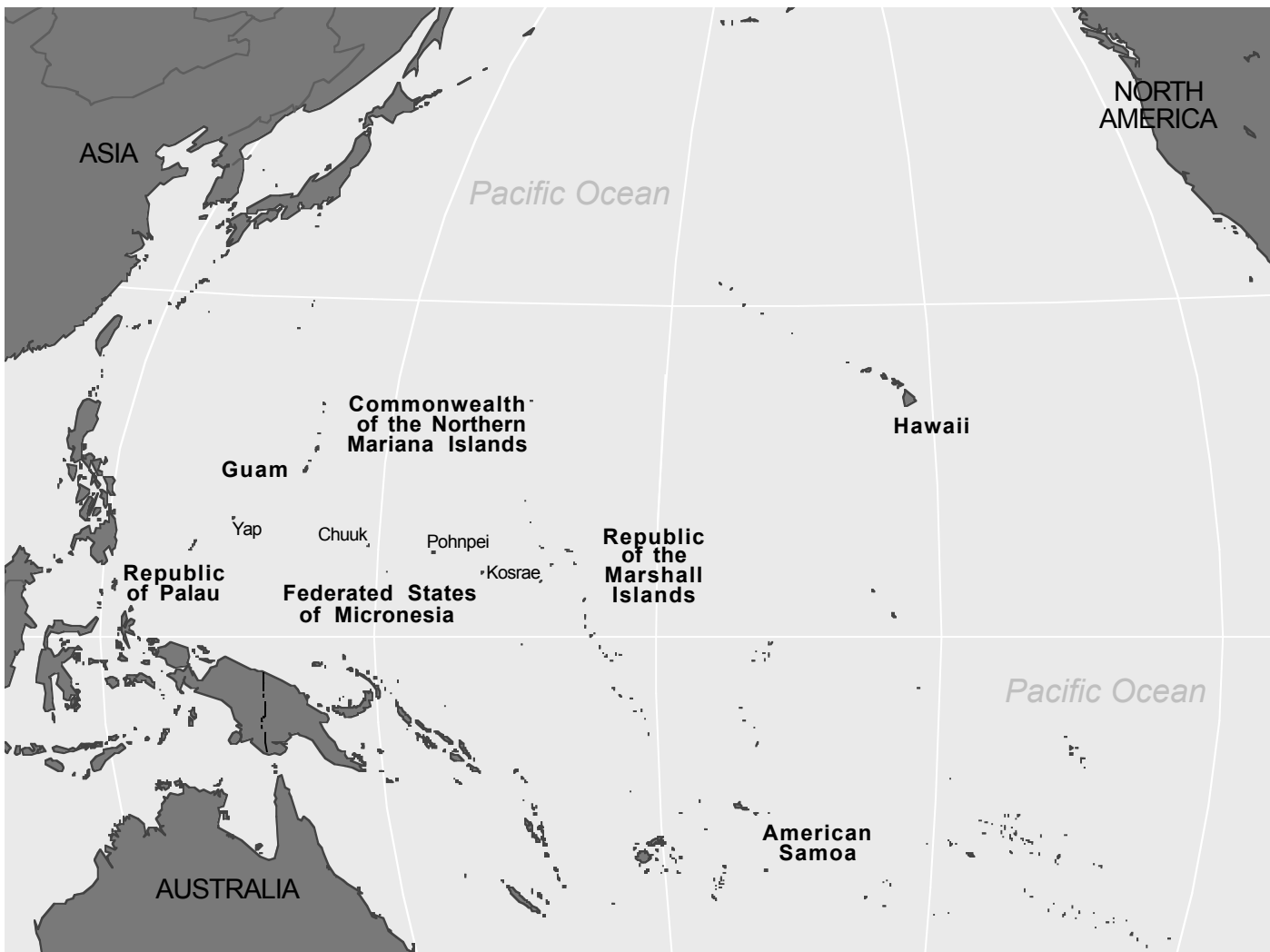
### Economic Challenges

Collectively, there are 1.6 million people throughout the islands who are challenged by an increasing globally interdependent economy in which education is the key to improved economic status and opportunity. Economic conditions in the region are typically below U.S. poverty levels, and disproportionate percentages of the population are under-educated, unemployed, and English as second language learners. Much of the region is transitioning from subsistence to cash economies. There is considerable income variation within the region. For example, the average 2002 per capita income in

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Originally presented at the American Evaluation Association (November 2006).

Funded in part by the National Science Foundation (NSF), award number REC0438452. The content does not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF or any other agency of the U.S. government.



the state of Hawai‘i is \$29,875 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2004), while in the RMI it is less than 10% of that figure (\$2,350; World Bank, 2004). Young and rapidly growing populations are common, placing an enormous challenge upon the social and educational systems and fragile economies. In the RMI, 50% of the population is under the age of 15.

Limited incomes suggest a need for financial support to educators interested in developing evaluation knowledge and skills.

### Cultural and Linguistic Challenges

The Pacific region is multicultural and multilingual. Among the region’s 1.6 million people, nine different Pacific cultures are prominent. With the exception of Hawai‘i, island populations tend to be ethnically homogeneous. For example, Samoans comprise 89% of the total population in American Samoa, and enjoy unique cultural practices, beliefs, and values.

More than 30 languages are in use in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific (PREL, 1995). With the exception of Hawai‘i and Guam, English is not spoken or written extensively by Pacific Islanders outside of school and government. Many of the students in the Pacific are, therefore, learning English as a second language and are eligible for bilingual services. A scarcity of first language materials and vague curriculum guidelines create a highly ineffective educational system that is typical of many schools throughout the region.

As noted by recent National Science Foundation (NSF) publications (2000, 2002a, 2002b), considerations of the cultural context of educational evaluation and inclusion of evaluators from these contexts are critical elements to an impartial understanding of programs and their effects. Methodologies that include quantitative and qualitative approaches; multiple measures and data sources; short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes; multiple definitions of “success;” and evaluators from the culture being studied are prescribed (NSF, 2000).

Evaluation training that considers the multicultural and multi-linguistic context of the region, incorporates concepts and methods of inquiry that are appropriate and useful to this context, and includes evaluators from the culture of interest is, therefore, recommended.

### Educational Systems Challenges

A further challenge to capacity building for evaluation in the region is the educational context itself. There are approximately 250,000 students enrolled in public and private elementary and secondary schools in the Pacific region (NCES, 2004). Most of these students are enrolled in schools classified as rural.

As in the rest of the U.S., English language learners often have difficulty achieving in school. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) studies of math and reading continue to document poor performance of students from Hawai'i, American Samoa, the CNMI, and Guam (NCES, 2004). While NAEP does not report achievement for other Pacific school communities, Pacific educators and researchers agree that student performance is well below standard in the rest of the region, while attrition levels are very high. For example, in the RMI, approximately two-thirds of students entering grade 3 do not progress to grade 12 (RMI Ministry of Education, 2003).

One of the most important challenges faced by Pacific entities is the supply and preparedness of educators. While 70% of teachers in Hawai'i hold at least a bachelor's degree, only 4% of the teachers in the RMI have a bachelor's degree.

In the Pacific, formal education has been based on subject curriculum objectives, rather than behavior and performance objectives (Helu, 2002). Although curriculum content has been localized to varying extents, it is still often perceived as removed from real life and largely irrelevant. An emphasis on factual content has displaced more culturally sound and practical subjects. Curriculum initiatives remain largely subject-focused, rather than outcomes-based. In addition, the majority of public schools have substandard facilities, with little access to libraries, electricity, running water, telephones, fax machines, photocopiers, or the Internet.

The fundamental factor impairing the achievement of satisfactory educational outcomes is suboptimal policy and planning strategies. Insufficient deliberative processes regarding appropriate or available programs, inadequate analysis of needs and preferences, and the failure to include appropriate resource allocations are key areas that need to be addressed. Administrators are often overwhelmed by day-to-day imperatives in departments and ministries of education and little time remains for effective planning and evaluation. Attending to administrative requirements and managing a multiplicity of programs places a strain on limited human resources.

- Needs for improved educational programs are evidenced by these findings, and support the development of graduate-level training in evaluation that is regionally-based and contextually relevant.

### Summary of Challenges

Given the geographic, economic, cultural/linguistic, and educational system challenges that exist in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific, all islands experience difficulties bringing about major educational changes. External support is necessary if any significant improvements in educational programs and their evaluation are to be realized.

According to the *Evaluation Capacity Development* publication of the World Bank (Mackay, 1999), when the demand for the conduct of evaluation is high and the corresponding supply of evaluators is low—as in the Pacific—governments should support university training in evaluation and work toward the establishment of evaluation networks. Mackay goes on to state that any evaluation capacity building effort “requires a long-term, multi-year framework or plan, necessitating the identification of clear targets to which the government is committed” (Mackay, 1999, p. 13).

An extensive, goals-based approach that considers the geographic context of trainees, their economic needs, the culture and language they originate from, as well as the educational systems they are trying to effect, is indicated. For these reasons, we developed a distance learning model of evaluation training that takes into account cross-cultural evaluation strategies and contexts and provides funding for a cohort of locally-based evaluators.

## PROJECT DESIGN

### Project Goals, Objectives, and Intended Outcomes

The fundamental goal of this project is to increase the capacity of the Pacific region to conduct high-quality, innovative, useful, and credible evaluations of educational programs, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The project will enhance the attainment of this goal by pursuing the following specific, measurable, and feasible objectives:

Objective 1: *To increase regional capacity to provide graduate training in evaluation.* The UH Mānoa is the primary accredited institution of higher education in the region. It has had a pivotal role in distance education, yet it struggles with the lack of capacity to reach its full potential. This project will significantly strengthen the capacity of the UH to develop an online master's-level

training in evaluation and to make it available regionally, nationally, and internationally.

*Objective 2: To increase the capacity of regional education agencies to engage in high-quality, innovative, useful, and credible evaluations.* Currently, evaluation functions in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific are understaffed, underfunded, and underutilized. The project will assist in developing the capacity of regional education agencies to establish effective evaluation systems for programs by offering previously unavailable training to professionals currently working in departments and ministries of education.

*Objective 3: To strengthen regional capacity to apply the results of program evaluations in educational program and policy decisions.* Educational program planners and decision makers in the region do not presently have the capacity to make decisions based on evaluative data. As a result of this project, regional education agencies will be able to immediately apply the training of their staff in the

evaluation of educational programs, so that informed decisions regarding educational programs and policies can be made.

## PROJECT PLAN

Table 1 presents the overall project plan in the form of a program theory that relates project objectives to related activities, short-term and intermediate outcomes, and intended long-term impacts.

### Project Activities

As described by Table 1, the program plan is comprised of a series of activities designed to create a program of study in evaluation offered through distance learning technologies. Activities include establishing working groups of cross-cultural evaluation specialists, faculty, and online course developers; recruiting and convening students; and providing course materials to them through multiple uses of technology.

TABLE 1  
Program Theory for Distance Learning Master's Degree Program in Evaluation

Objectives	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term Impacts
<p>To increase Pacific region capacity to provide graduate training in evaluation</p> <p>To increase the capacity of the Pacific region's education agencies to engage in high-quality, innovative, useful, and credible evaluations.</p> <p>To increase Pacific regional capacity to apply the results of program evaluations in educational program and policy decisions</p>	Convene a cross-cultural advisory group to determine specific needs for regionally and culturally appropriate evaluation training	Establish first of its kind distance learning master's degree program in evaluation in the U.S.	Participants are proficient at conducting evaluation to enhance teaching and learning	Improved data collection systems are developed and utilized in program and policy decision making
	In association with the UH faculty, tailor coursework to the context and culture of the region	Increased capacity of the UH to provide distance learning graduate instruction in evaluation regionally	Participants successfully complete the program	Research-based decisions result in improved educational programs in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and other fields
	Translate courses into an online format and train faculty in online course planning and instruction (ongoing)	Participants appreciate the ethical, cultural, and societal issues associated with the conduct of educational evaluation in the Pacific region	Graduates engage in training, coaching, and mentoring of colleagues	Students demonstrate greater engagement with learning, achievement, and competencies
	Determine target population for program	Participants actively engage in program evaluation	Future cohorts of students graduate from program regionally, nationally, and internationally	
	Recruit participants and address participation logistics	Participants integrate learning into their practice		
	Develop stand-alone multimedia products (e.g., CD-ROM) to support curriculum and enhance student learning			
	Establish mechanisms to provide ongoing support and technical assistance to program participants (e.g., videoconferences, learning groups)			
	Assign faculty to courses			
	Convene students for orientation and summer course			
	Provide online courses and CD-ROM of course materials (ongoing)			
Conduct formative evaluation and use data to modify the program of study				
Graduate first cohort of students				

**Partners and Roles.** There are two major project partners involved in the creation and implementation of this project: PREL and the UH Mānoa's Department of Educational Foundations. PREL will lead program administration, including project management and oversight, online course and CD-ROM development, faculty training in the use of distance learning technologies, videoconferencing, and the formation of learning groups. PREL will also coordinate and convene a cross-cultural evaluation advisory council that will ensure that courses are regionally relevant and appropriate. Advisory group members will be drawn from leadership within the American Evaluation Association's (AEA's) International and Cross-Cultural Evaluation (ICCE) and Minority Evaluation

(ME) Topical Interest Groups (TIGs), and from our Pacific regional evaluation associations (e.g., Hawai'i-Pacific Evaluation Association [H-PEA] Evaluation Hui).

The UH Mānoa will serve as the course provider and degree-granting institution of higher education. Courses will be selected and adapted from those offered by the College of Education, and current faculty of the college and adjunct faculty will provide them through the university's Outreach College.

## Curriculum

The project will incorporate a specialization in evaluation to a preexisting master's degree program within UH College of Education's Department of Educational Foundations. The Education Foundations department focuses on comparative, international, global, environmental, and multicultural concerns of education. The planned program of study will require completion of 30 credit hours over the course of six semesters, and no thesis.

The 10 courses—8 existing and 2 to be developed—will be tailored to incorporate issues important to the field of evaluation and to the special needs and interests of the Pacific region. Each course is listed below with its published course number and description (in italics), and our approach toward tailoring it to the special issues in the Pacific.

### **Introduction to Educational Research: EDEP 608**

*Fundamental design and evaluation procedures in educational research. Determining needs, defining objectives, research design, instrumentation, data collection, and evaluation.*

This course will be taught in a hybrid manner, with the first half of the course taught in the classroom in Honolulu in connection with the initial orientation period and the second half of the course offered online after students return to their respective home Pacific island entities. This course features fundamental research and evaluation design and procedures in educational research. This standard introduction to educational research has been tailored to the Pacific with examples of research conducted in minority and indigenous communities and will include a substantial strand involving reading, discussion, and application of concepts related to culturally- or contextually-relevant evaluation and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) evaluation. Research will be presented in a practical, problem-centered approach that applies culturally appropriate research design and data collection methods.

### **Educational Statistics: EDEA 629**

*Statistical inference including applications of parametric and nonparametric methods to educational problems.*

Educational Statistics will be taught in a hybrid fashion, with half of the course taught in the classroom in Honolulu in connection with the initial orientation period. Technology will be introduced in a highly supportive environment, with curricular supports that include very basic instructions and flowcharts that have been tested in advance for cultural appropriateness and suitability. Upon completion of this course, students will

have a basic understanding of educational statistics and will be able to apply it to STEM-related data sets. They will be competent users of descriptive and inferential statistics through analysis of variance (ANOVA) and regression, and be able to select and apply statistical methods that are appropriate to their research questions and data, including those associated with STEM. Students will have experience with and appreciation of exploratory data analysis and a conceptual understanding of power analysis.

### **Introduction to Evaluation**

*New Course*

The course provides practical guidance for the conduct of an evaluation study from its inception, through the planning stage, to research design, data collection, and data analysis, to the reporting, dissemination, and application of conclusions. Students will learn the most fundamental concepts in evaluation and begin to build basic evaluation skills. The concepts will be introduced with reference to evaluation of programs in the specific islands served, and the special need for considering geographic, economic, linguistic, and cultural contexts of STEM programs. Major texts, journals, and associations (e.g., AEA, International and Cross-cultural TIG, H-PEA) in the field of evaluation will be introduced.

### **Seminar in Educational Foundations: EDEF 667**

*History of colonization of the Pacific islands and its educational, political, economic, and sociocultural consequences.*

Seminar in Educational Foundations is an interdisciplinary course on education in the Pacific islands. Readings are selected from a variety of disciplines, such as history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, political science, and literature. Most of the readings have been tailored to focus on the Pacific islands. However, other relevant readings will be used to discuss issues relevant to the Pacific. Selected scholars will be invited to present a PowerPoint lecture. Based on lectures and readings, students will discuss and critique education in the Pacific islands, past and present.

### **Foundations of Evaluation Theory**

*New Course*

Students of Foundations of Evaluation Theory will engage in intensive online study of evaluation topics and core concepts. Course objectives include understanding the history, influences, and evolution of evaluation across the globe; under-

standing and identifying the conceptual distinctions between contemporary theories of evaluation practice; and becoming familiar with systems for categorizing evaluation theories. This course will set new standards for pressing theory into effective practical approaches suitable for island cultures and STEM programs. Major texts, journals, and associations in the field of evaluation will be introduced (e.g., AEA, Evaluation Theory TIG, H-PEA).

**Survey Research Design and Analysis: EDEA 608**

*Survey study designs, survey sampling, questionnaire construction, interviewing, pretests, pilot studies, logic of measurement and association, table construction, and elaboration models.*

A standard introduction to survey research course tailored with examples of research conducted in minority and indigenous communities in the Pacific and STEM programs. This course features survey study designs, survey sampling, questionnaire construction, interviewing, pretests, pilot studies, logic of measurement and association, table construction, and elaboration models. Use of computer applications will be highlighted, along with problem sets that require group collaboration and application of basic to advanced statistical tools for survey research design and analysis.

**Seminar in Educational Psychology: Educational Evaluation: EDEP 768G**

*Current issues and problems in the context of educational evaluation.*

This course features application of previous coursework, including evaluation research theory, educational research methods, and statistics, to create an evaluation plan for a project to be conducted as part of the program completion requirements. Upon completion of this course, students will have developed a full evaluation project plan for implementation. Student products will include background information on the project and site in which it is to be conducted, including key cultural considerations and other features of the study context; identification of primary stakeholders, their roles, and likely perspectives; evaluation methods and rationale; instrumentation; data collection plans and protocols; data analysis plans; and reporting strategies, including identification of target audiences for the final reports, timeline, and methods of dissemination suited to each audience.

**Social and Cultural Contexts of Education: EDEF 683**

*Focuses on the interplay of class, race, gender, and ethnicity in school and community settings. Social praxis, educational reform and policy are considered.*

The course will focus on Pacific island society and culture, and research on the relationships between culture and education that has emerged in the Pacific region in recent years. Social and cultural influences on education and the reciprocal influences of education on Pacific island nations will be explored. We will examine schooling in the context of relationships in the broader society by examining colonial experiences of education. Through this process, students will become acquainted with theoretical approaches to understanding education and consider the multiple purposes that education and STEM education serves in differing societies.

**International Development Education: EDEF 685**

*Introduction to international development education in Asian and Pacific nations. Students explore links between education and development. Emphasis is on cross-cultural perception of development.*

This course is intended to develop a cross-cultural discourse about the important role that education plays in the relationship between education and development. This course will explore the links between education and development in various countries of the Pacific and the world. We examine concepts of development and the role of education as an agent of change. The course pays particular attention to exploring the links between STEM education and the three major spheres of development: economic, sociocultural, and political. The course also considers educational policy and practice in the context of development by exploring alternative ways of addressing educational dilemmas in locations with the Pacific. At issue will be the decision making processes, the barriers to international cooperation in education, and the effort to build infrastructure that yields success in the broader processes of island nation development.

**Directed Research (Evaluation Project): EDEF 699**

*Individual reading and/or research.*

As the culminating project-based experience for students, this course features application of previous coursework on evaluation research theory, educational research methods, and statistics, to implement an evaluation plan for a project to be conducted as part of the program completion requirements. Evaluation projects will be completed within the context of

one semester (approximately 3.5 months). Projects may be part of a longer-term initiative but must be capable of standing alone. Where appropriated, the projects will be related to the evaluation of STEM programs. This course will allow mentors in the islands to work directly with students and faculty in Educational Foundations to deliver a polished evaluation project report upon completion of the course. Students will also be taught how to mentor and train others in evaluation design and methodologies.

Table 2 presents the tentative course schedule.

TABLE 2  
Master's in Evaluation Course Schedule

Year	Semester	Course
1	Summer	Educational Statistics
	Fall	Education and the American Experience Introduction to Educational Research
	Spring	Introduction to Evaluation Foundations of Evaluation Theory
2	Summer	Survey Research Design and Analysis
	Fall	Seminar in Educational Psychology: Educational Evaluation Social and Cultural Contexts of Education
	Spring	Directed Research (Evaluation Project) International Development Education
	Late Spring	Virtual Graduation

It is anticipated that the 2-year program will consist of courses offered in a hybrid asynchronous/synchronous format. Instruction will be self-paced, within the constraints of assignment deadlines, and students will interact with faculty and other students through online course platforms, videoconferencing, and site-based learning groups.

Students will convene in-person during the first semester's orientation (Year 1, summer) to meet the instructors, receive training on distance learning instruction, facilitate future communication among faculty and students and among students, and receive their first course: Educational Statistics. Students will meet again during the summer of Year 2 for a second summer school course: Survey Research Design and Analysis, follow-up training, and program evaluation.

### Use of Technology

This project will advance knowledge and understanding of creative uses of technology. The following distance learning technologies will be applied in a hybrid asynchronous/synchronous manner.

**Online Courses.** Courses will be selected and adapted from those offered by the College of Education, and translated into an Internet-based online course platform (i.e., WebCT). They will be offered primarily in an asynchronous format, and instruction will be self-paced within the constraints of assignment deadlines. Faculty members unfamiliar with online course instruction will be provided with initial assistance in translating their instructional practice to online teaching techniques. This training will include suggestions for selecting a desirable course platform, the creation of syllabi and handouts, grade book design, threaded discussions, and online assignments and tests.

**CD-ROMs.** Although PREL uses online platforms to deliver much of its student and professional development programming, many of the entities in its service area suffer from very limited (or no) bandwidth. As a result, the program will develop materials for online delivery for locations with high bandwidth; back-up CD-ROMs for locations with only dial-up Internet connectivity; and alternate paper versions for those locations with unreliable electricity or technology infrastructure.

**Video Conferencing.** Videoconferencing will support university courses taught through online course platforms and CD-ROMs. Other applications include mentoring students, sharing evaluation activities across the region, course planning, and special workshops or presentations.

**Site-Based Learning Groups.** "Learning communities" within each entity will meet regularly to hold discussions, share information, and support each other to complement online courses, CD-ROM, and videoteleconference (VTC). PREL Service Center staff and facilities will assist with the formation and continuity of these gatherings.

### Participants

Departments and ministries of education and institutions of higher education in each Pacific entity will be invited to nominate three to four individuals for participation; general applications will also be accepted. All 10 Pacific entities will thereby be represented in the initial cohort. In keeping with program guidelines, the students will be employed in education and will represent a diversity of roles.

The project will accept 20 applicants who meet eligibility requirements for admission to the program. Admission requirements are established by UH and the Department of Educational Foundations, and include the following:

- Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited U.S. college or university, or its equivalent from a recognized foreign institution of higher learning

- A grade point average of 3.0 or the equivalent in the last 2 years of undergraduate study and in all post-baccalaureate
- Undergraduate coursework in professional education equivalent to the bachelor's in education degree requirements at the UH Mānoa
- Teaching experience
- Statement of objectives
- Letters of recommendation (2)

All Pacific Islanders are exempt from English language proficiency tests (i.e., Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL]), and standardized exam scores (e.g., Graduate Record Examination [GRE]) are not required by the Educational Foundations program for master's-level programs.

### PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

**Evaluator Capabilities.** The primary project beneficiaries are the program's students. Master's degree candidates will be derived from each of the 10 entities and are intended to represent an occupationally diverse group of currently employed planning and policy staff members, curriculum and assessment specialists, administrators, and other education professionals. Through increased access to quality education in evaluation, this group will be provided the understanding and skills needed to immediately participate in the evaluation of educational programs in the region.

**Regional Program Management Capabilities.** The project will strengthen regional institutional capacity to develop effective basic education through improvements in strategic planning and implementation. Education planners, teacher trainers, and curriculum developers will benefit through improved evaluation services. Directors and ministers of education will profit by the enhanced skills of their staff to more effectively support the delivery of high-quality and expanded education services to meet the needs of children and youth—the ultimate beneficiaries of improved programs.

**Regional Institution of Higher Education.** The capacity of the UH Mānoa to provide training in evaluation through distance learning will also be developed through this partnership. Various areas of the university, especially the College of Education and its Department of Educational Foundations, will advance. At present, no master's-level training in evaluation through distance learning is available in the United States.

Because continuation and expansion of the program is expected, this first-of-its-kind program could provide the university with an ongoing resource of future students regionally, nationally, and internationally.

**Evaluation Discipline.** In the long-term, the discipline of evaluation will benefit through improved concepts, skills, and techniques available widely through distance education to an international audience of students. The project will create and disseminate courses that promote the development of culturally and internationally appropriate concepts and methods of inquiry. This will benefit the international community of evaluators and researchers by developing a body of related knowledge and making it widely available through distance education. This knowledge will also inform and enrich the evaluation methods and practices of evaluators of programs having cross-cultural components in the continental U.S. In addition, an inherent aspect of the planned program of study is the involvement of an association of Pacific evaluators—the H-PEA. The purpose of the H-PEA is to promote the dissemination and cross-national sharing of regionally-appropriate evaluation concepts and practices.

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