NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release
Tuesday, January 28, 2014

Parents, educators, businesses and community organizations statewide come together to achieve Hawaii’s education goal of 55 percent with a college degree by 2025
Public urged to join the movement

B-ROLL VIDEO LINK: http://bit.ly/1adBxzL (detailed shot list at end of news release)

HONOLULU—Leaders in education and business, and politicians spoke at a news conference today in an effort to strengthen the state’s workforce through higher education. During the event at Honolulu Community College, Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education (Hawaii P-20), a statewide partnership led by the Executive Office on Early Learning, the Hawaii State Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii System today announced the launch of Phase II of the “55 by ’25” campaign.

The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found that by 2018, 65 percent of jobs in Hawaii will require some college, and according to the U.S. Census, just under 42 percent of Hawaii’s adults currently hold a two- or four-year college degree. This leaves a 23 percent skills gap; an alarming percentage to Hawaii’s educational leaders.

In order for Hawaii to meet the challenges of an increasingly global economy, the Hawaii P-20 Council established a goal for 55 percent of Hawaii’s working age adults to have a two- or four-year college degree by the year 2025. Stressing the need for community-wide participation, civic leaders illustrated ways everyone — from parents and educators to businesses and community organizations — can help achieve this goal. Governor Neil Abercrombie; Kathryn Matayoshi, Superintendent of Hawaii State Department of Education; David Lassner, Interim President of the University of Hawaii System; GG Weisenfeld, Director of Executive Office on Early Learning; John La Forgia, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of Hawaii Pacific Health; Karen Lee, Executive Director of Hawaii P-20 and Richard Mizusawa, UH Manoa student and Chair of the UH Student Caucus all shared details on what is currently being done in support of this campaign, ways the community can help, and the myriad of benefits a more educated workforce means for our local economy.

The effort is also being supported by the Hawaii State Legislature, as the news conference closed with a joint House and Senate certificate presented by Senator Jill Tokuda and Representative Roy Takumi.
“The 55 by ‘25 campaign asks everyone, not just teachers and parents, to be involved in and accountable for a child’s success, which starts well before he or she enters school,” said Karen Lee, Executive Director of Hawaii P-20. “We’re calling on businesses to offer more internships and incentives for employees to complete college. We’re calling on the government to expand and invest in more academic programs and initiatives. We’re calling on executives to engage in more speaking opportunities at schools. We’re calling on parents to get involved at their children’s school, and make sure their kids get enough sleep at night and do their homework. We’re calling on the entire community to put education at the forefront of our priorities.”

Alarming survey results
In the winter of 2012, Omnitrak Group, a Hawaii-based market research firm, surveyed a random sample of 700 adult citizens (400 from Oahu and 100 each from Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii) about the need for higher education. A disconcerting 17 percent of residents surveyed said a college education is “not necessary” in response to the question: To develop a marketable workforce, do you feel a 2- or 4-year college degree is an absolute necessity to get, helpful but not a necessity, or not necessary? A 2008 survey asking the same question reported only seven percent of respondents answered that a college education is not necessary, signaling a significant decrease in the value of college over three years. According to U.S. Census data, currently, only 41.7 percent of Hawaii’s workforce holds a two- or four-year degree.

“The academic improvement of our state as reflected in the 2013 ‘Nation’s Report Card’ released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress is an indication that we are on track to meet the higher standards we have set in our schools,” said Kathryn Matayoshi, Superintendent of Hawaii State Department of Education. “Our public schools are implementing Hawaii Common Core Standards that define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college and careers when they graduate. In order to reach our goal of increasing the percentage of Hawaii’s workforce with a college degree to 55 percent by the year 2025, it is critical that we all work together to nurture the academic talent here in our state.”

“As Hawai‘i’s largest health care provider, we are always looking for skilled workers to fill a range of positions at our four hospitals and more than 50 outpatient clinics and service sites located statewide,” said Ray Vara, president and CEO of Hawaii Pacific Health. “Ensuring Hawaii’s emerging workforce is prepared to fill these jobs and the many others needed across all industries is very important to us. We encourage everyone in Hawaii, especially our business community, to join us in supporting this effort so we can meet the goal of 55 percent of working age adults holding a college degree by 2025.”

Hawaii P-20’s website offers parents, business leaders, and community organizations a variety of ways they can get involved. Everyone is encouraged to pledge their support at no cost at www.55by25.org.

Leading Supporters
In addition to the entities that formed the Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education, other supporting organizations include the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, the Hawaii Business Roundtable, the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, the Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and the HE’E Coalition. Major sponsors for the campaign include: Hawaii Pacific Health, Hawaiian Airlines, Hawaiian Telcom, and First Insurance of Hawaii.

(more)
About Hawaii P-20
Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education is a statewide partnership led by the Executive Office on Early Learning, the Hawaii State Department of Education and the University of Hawaii System that is working to strengthen the education pipeline from early childhood through higher education so that all students achieve career and college success. For more information, please visit www.p20hawaii.org.

“55 BY ‘25” AD: http://vimeo.com/83731003

VIDEO LINK: http://bit.ly/1adBxzL

BROLL (1 minute, 58 seconds)

Preschool students (4 shots: 00:00 - 00:17)
Elementary students (6 shots: 00:17 - 00:42)
High school students (5 shots: 00:42 - 01:07)
UH campus (2 shots UH Manoa, 2 shots West Oahu, 2 shots Leeward CC: 01:07 - 01:38)
UH students in classrooms (4 shots: 01:38 - 01:58)

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FOR MEDIA ONLY: For digital images and video from the press conference, or an interview with Karen Lee, please contact Jennifer Pang at (808) 371-2882 / jpang@pangcomm.com or Darcy Manning at (323) 635-6407 / dmanning@pangcomm.com.