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Student-Athletes in The Pacific: A Rainbow of Colors, Cultures and Traditions

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The University of Hawaii at Manoa’s football team has a “richness in terms of color, cultures, customs and even languages” that provides a “context for a unique experience.”

Hawaii is a melting pot with diversity and multiculturalism touching lifestyles in both obvious and subtle ways. In the same vein, its state university, the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) with the venerated rainbow as its school nickname and its Division I football team are microcosmic examples of this mix. Student-athletes truly have an unparalleled rainbow experience as a qualitative study exploring and describing the domains of a football student-athlete culture recently discovered.

While the ethnic distribution at UHM has no distinct majority, its "melting pot" demographics provide a unique and interesting milieu to describe the academic and athletic experiences of football student-athletes. Interestingly, the ethnic and cultural landscape of the UHM Rainbow Warriors football team does *not* parallel that of the general student body. For example, whites make up 21% of the general student population but only 15% of the football team. Blacks on the other hand, are 1.0% of the college student count but comprise 27% of the 100+ team composition. The largest grouping of football student-athletes are either of mixed ethnic backgrounds or Pacific Islanders, making up 49% of the total players.

Within the team then, richness in terms of color, cultures, customs and even languages provide the context for a unique experience.

PRESENTER

Dr. Patricia A. Nishimoto serves as Assistant Director/Career Counselor of the Career Services office at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM). She recently obtained her Ed.D. degree from UHM where her dissertation focus was on the lives of football student-athletes on a college campus. As a career counselor, she has been particularly interested in program planning and student development projects that impact special populations, including the student-athlete, the minority student and the disabled student. She began her professional career as a public school teacher in Hawaii and Arizona.

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