For many, going off to college in a different state is a small transition, but for students from Hawai‘i it can be overwhelming. The changes in climate, culture, and colloquialisms present many challenges for those adjusting to a new environment away from a familiar and culturally distinct home.

Pacific University is nestled on the west edge of the Portland metro area, in the small town of Forest Grove. Founded in 1849, the school traces its origins to Reverend Harvey Clark, a Congregationalist minister, and Tabitha Brown, a teacher from Massachusetts. These links to missionary history were kept alive with the missions in Honolulu as the Euro-American influence spread across Turtle Island and along the American west coast. This also gave rise to the connection between Hawai‘i and the first missionaries who arrived in the islands in 1820, who kept close contact with their counterparts on the continent.

Over the decades, the connection grew stronger even as missionary influence faded from the forefront of Hawaiian politics and affairs. Recruiting visits by Pacific admissions advisors became regular events beginning in the 1960s and continue today, bringing many new students from the islands. Currently, roughly one out of five undergraduates at Pacific University are from Hawai‘i -- double the average number of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian students at other Oregon universities.

Pacific University gives support to these students through a strong Hawai‘i outreach program and its Hawaiian club, Nā Haumāna O Hawai‘i (NHOH). The outreach program and NHOH hold Hawaiian values such as Hōihi (respect), ʻOhana (family, relative), and Pa‘ahana (to work diligently and industriously) in high regards. NHOH also hosts annual events and a widely attended luʻau to uphold familiar traditions and celebrations. These familiar community values and dynamics have helped foster wonderful experiences for students away from home.
I hope that students from Hawai‘i feel that they’re part of the NHOH ‘ohana, not only while they’re students at Pacific, but well after they graduate. Peer mentors support freshmen and transfers as they transition to college life at Pacific. NHOH provides programs for members to meet other students and help them explore off campus sights, and make friends that will last a lifetime. The club also gives the haumāna opportunities to be in leadership roles to learn organization, communication and time management skills. These experiences help them be contributing members of their community, whether it be back in Hawai‘i or here on the mainland.

Janalei Chun
Director, Hawai‘i Outreach and Programing & Nā Haumāna Hawai‘i Advisor

Aloha and ohana is the base of Hawaii. Family is like a community and your community soon becomes family. It’s the basic need for the people and communities. I found it in people from Hawai‘i which is why I think it’s a base of all Hawaiian people. Like we are just kind of born with aloha.

Kassie Kalena Tarpley
Nā Haumāna Hawai‘i student member

NHOH has helped me adjust to mainland life so much and I’m so glad that I am able to be a part of it. It’s been able to give me a home away from home and I will always be grateful for that. Aunty Jana and the rest of the NHOH staff really want what’s best for you and will help you with whatever you need. You just gotta reach out and put yourself out there.

Jazz Burns
Nā Haumāna Hawai‘i student member

By being in a tight-knit community, I feel that you make connections much more easily and feel like you aren’t as displaced.

Trevyn Dobayashi
Nā Haumāna Hawai‘i student member
Coming here was definitely different because I was no longer in a place of acceptance. Hawai‘i is so diverse and a place where my ethnicity (Japanese) is large. Many individuals here differ in cultural beliefs which can frame a challenge. Last year I got to participate in the Hō‘ike as a dance instructor. I found it fun to share the culture and dance with others who may have been less familiar. It was also cool to watch my peers work together and dance as one. All the planning for the dance was exciting but unfortunately, COVID had caused the Hō‘ike to get cancelled so our dance was never seen by an audience.

Kara Yoshiyama
Nā Haumāna Hawai‘i student member

Ohana and aloha can be synonymous. You can love your family and you can even call those you aren't related to by blood your family members. I definitely feel that among my friend group that I have found here at Pacific. They are from Hawai‘i so that makes it a little easier. But I even feel that way with other people I have met who are from the Pacific Northwest. There's a lot of nice folks out there. Just don't be shame and you'll find the right people for you.

Ezra Pira
Nā Haumāna Hawai‘i student member