TO: Erika Lacro, Vice President for the University of Hawai‘i Community Colleges

FROM: Marlene Spence, Bert Shimabukuro, Dennis Pajela, Steve Foell, Fumi Takasugi (HonCC); Garrett Fujioka, Colby Koreyasu, Harold Fujii (HawCC); Laura Lees Nagle (MauiC); and Gordon Talbo (KauCC).

DATE: November 9, 2020

SUBJECT: Auto Body Repair and Painting Programs Cross Campus Response

Description of cross-campus group’s process.

In response to the UHCC VP Erika Lacro memo on October 12, 2020, four campuses were identified as offering relevant classes and certificates in Auto Body Repair and Painting (ABRP). Faculty, administrators, and lecturers from HawCC, HonCC, KauCC and UHMauC met twice for cross-campus discussion on 10/26/20 and 10/27/20 co-facilitated by Laura Lees Nagle and Fumi Takasugi. Faculty contributions during the two discussions were recorded in a Google doc to help guide the discussion and to serve as a document for follow-up notes that the group could edit together, both during and after the discussion (notes). A draft memo was developed from the notes collected from the two discussions to serve as a foundation for this response to the UHCC VP and the BoR. Additional relevant data and letters are also attached to this memo.

Key data indicators and trends that emerged from discussion as significant and reason for significance

1. **Overview of UHCC Programs:** Of the four CC campuses, two programs (HawCC and HonCC) are robust and strong, while two (MauC and KauCC) are recovering from recent stop outs. A brief description of each program is provided below:

   a. HonCC recently experienced one full-time faculty retirement in July 2019. A full-time lecturer was brought on for Fall 2019. With heavy recruitment efforts starting in summer 2019, the program has since increased student enrollment to double-digits and has a DOE cohort (Waipahu, Leilehua, and Aiea High Schools) of 8 students (modeled on the Early College High School program but with classes meeting at HonCC) running alongside the regular HonCC cohort of 13 for the 2020-2021 academic year. The program currently has two full-time lecturers and an APT. With increased industry support, the program has been running the I-Car curriculum. The online curriculum has also helped the classes to continue while having to go online for weeks at a stretch for both the Spring and Fall 2020 semesters due to COVID-19. Classes are currently running face to face, with the two cohorts set to finish their CAs in Summer 2021. In Fall 2020, a new advisory board was developed with strong industry backing.

   b. HawCC has two full-time faculty for approximately 30 majors per year and offers the program with two cohorts of 12-15 students per cohort, which is the capacity
of the shop space without physical distancing. The facilities have state of the art training equipment that include spray booths featuring downdraft ventilation systems, three-dimensional computerized vehicle measuring system, and aluminum repair equipment, one of the only on Hawai‘i island. The cohort-based model has resulted in high retention and graduation rates of 90%. The HawCC Autobody faculty have strong partnerships with local high schools, successfully recruiting and currently working on offering seats for Early College students. The HawCC Autobody program maintains the industry recognized I-Car curriculum which allows the program to keep up with quickly changing industry innovations.

c. The Maui College ABRP program saw a dramatic decline in enrollment during 2014 through 2016 shop renovations. Never fully recovering, the program began stopping out in 2018. After industry partner consultation and campus discussion, the autobody curriculum was embedded into the Automotive Technician AAS program starting fall 2020. While enrollment was insufficient to run courses in fall 2020, the Autobody Association, UHMC Automotive faculty, UHMC CTE dean and DOE CTE dean are strategically planning for robust enrollment and high school partnerships for fall 2021.

d. The Autobody program at Kauai CC also began stopping out two years ago. Similar to Maui, Kauai Autobody industry partners reached out because there was an unmet need for technicians. Last year, KauCC redesigned its ABRP courses under AMT 199V alphas and under the AMT program. Even though these courses have not completed the curriculum process and do not qualify for financial aid, these sections are 100% full. KauCC will create a new Non-Structural Analysis and Damage Repair CA and will add Structural Repair if demand is enough. Currently all ABRP courses are in already existing ABRP facilities and supported by the AMT budget and Alu Like grant supplemental funds.

2. An Evolving, High Skilled Industry

The autobody industry has changed drastically in recent years, as evident in a proposed name change from Auto Body Repair and Painting to Collision Repair and Refinishing Technology. This name change reflects an industry once identified with dent and paint repair into a highly technical, computerized, precise, high skilled, and high stakes industry. A misperception of the requirements of the industry has seemingly hindered a robust pipeline of students to industry.

The UHCC Autobody programs have an incredibly strong relationship with industry partners, represented by the Autobody Association of Hawaii. UHCC Autobody programs have pivoted to meet the changing curriculum needs through adoption of I-Car curriculum, which is industry validated. (See attached letter of support from industry
referring to the complexity of the curriculum and the changing needs of the industry employers, and the requirement of the associate degree level education.)

Non-credit offerings in ABRP have been attempted in the past, but the cost was too high; thus, efforts faced difficulties. One clear obstacle is the lack of financial aid for non-credit classes, but even without the issue of financial aid, students would want credit for the amount of hours required through the I-Car curriculum, especially for purposes of employment.

While the AAS degree is often not necessary for employment, discussion among the programs as well as voices from industry are strong in a push to move for offering the AAS degree in addition to the CA. Advisory board meetings have revealed that in addition to the hands-on skills acquired through credit programs, professional skills around areas such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem solving are deemed extremely valuable in potential employees. These are the skills that make a potential employee “industry-ready.” The degree says a lot about a student and new employees are always asked about their level of education and amount of credit hours completed. Furthermore, there are entities such as Servco Pacific that do require the AAS degree in ABRP for a Body and Paint position. The amount of learning required in areas such as research and information (Sonar, cameras, computers, and related technology) cannot be delivered in short-term training. Moving forward in this industry, these skills will become increasingly valuable and necessary; thus, the increased need for the AAS degree.

3. Strong Industry Validation

Statewide, Autobody faculty maintain robust relationships with their local industry partners, which is the foundation for strong workforce development programs that prepare students for jobs within each region. Industry input is invaluable for planning and technological innovation, and provides up-to-date awareness of the needs and expectations of employers. Industry advisory committees help faculty shape new educational programs and identify current and emerging technologies—often resulting in donations to colleges.

The HawaiiCC faculty created a survey after being notified that they would be participating in a cross-campus working committee to discuss their program. There were two primary reasons a survey was conducted. First, education begins and ends with employers. In their call to action, they received 38 responses.

Secondly, employers throughout the State rely on the UHCC programs to deliver graduates. As the only provider of Auto body workforce training in the State of Hawaii, the ABRP program feeds into small businesses who need enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs. Relationships with employers also afford job opportunities. From aligning programs with regional job openings to understanding the skill-set required for job placement, local business partnerships are the key to successfully
linking students to job openings and supporting the regional economy. The vast majority of students who complete a program are employed after finishing.

The survey responses were comprised of 38 employers. 30 currently hire graduates from the UHCC Auto Body Program. 18 out of the 30 employers operate a business on Hawaii Island. Many are alumni of the UHCC and have become successful business owners. Employers found graduates to have good work ethics and observed improvement in knowledge and skills in recent years.

One third of employers require employees to have a minimum qualification of a 2-year degree in ABRP. 99% of respondents expressed the negative impacts that would occur if there was no ABRP program offered in the State. Employers also pointed out that the industry is evolving as vehicles evolve and the program is a needed pipeline that prepares students. In sum, the ABRP degree provides value to employers and to our communities.

4. **Essential Specialty Trade and High Demand**

While the industry undergoes rapid change, it also continues to be deemed an industry that remains essential to the state, especially in the current pandemic environment. A recent news article makes the connection between past, present, and future with the UHCC ABRP program a prominent component of this new reality: [https://www.khon2.com/news/business-matters/business-matters-learning-life-lessons-in-a-garage/](https://www.khon2.com/news/business-matters/business-matters-learning-life-lessons-in-a-garage/)

Graduates are in high demand in the field. In spring 2020, of 13 HawaiiCC graduates, 11 are currently employed in industry, despite COVID-19 impacts. One went into another industry and the other has not responded. For HonCC, in Spring 2020, of 7 graduates (2 did not finish the 3rd semester internship), 3 are currently employed in the local industry.

5. **Enrollment Explained**

Recent low enrollments in Autobody programs at HonCC, KauCC, and MauiC are due to loss of full-time faculty and shop renovations. HawCC is currently at 100% enrollment due to shop space capacity. HonCC is in a similar situation with an additional DOE cohort running in a physically distanced environment.

**Recommendations**

1. **Action 1: Work on more closely aligning curriculum.** All programs agreed that this work was necessary. In addition to I-Car being the industry standard, in order for the programs to more cost-effectively serve the needs of the state, better aligning curriculum is understood to be an important step.
2. **Action 2:** Communicate changing curriculum and evidence of demand for degree by industry such as survey and/or association letter

3. **Action 3:** Explore possibilities of sharing lecturers and courses as programs are revitalizing, perhaps using dormitories at both HonCC and HawCC to house off island students for hands-on portions of coursework. Consider options for pathways from one year certificate at Maui College to HawCC and HonCC.

4. **Action 4:** Consider how to increase revenue generation possibilities through “live work.” While live work was minimized due to COVID-19 concerns, this was deemed a way for programs to offset the costs of materials, since these are expensive for autobody programs. Increased rates for live jobs at about 60% (below industry pricing) would seem reasonable and a way for programs to be more self-sufficient.
Imagine getting into a car accident and having to take your vehicle into a shop for major repairs? Are you able to restore my car back to its pre-accident condition? Are you able to fix my car so that it is safe to drive? Will my car look and drive the same after repairs? These are the questions the collision repair industry in the State of Hawaii are challenged with as we help our communities get back to driving safely on Hawaii’s roads. The University of Hawaii Community College Auto Body Repair and Painting programs, promoting modern training, and producing skilled technicians, are vital to ensuring that the collision repair industry can maintain safe vehicles on Hawaii’s roads.

For decades, the University of Hawaii Auto Body and Painting programs throughout the state have produced many of the skilled technicians working in our communities today. Graduates of the program are employed in a variety of related fields including collision repair and restoration, commercial auto services, dealerships, insurance companies, part suppliers, recycling, and many more. Notable alumni that have completed the UH program are successful small business owners and industry leaders in our communities today, Ron Burkhart (Owner of Pearridge Fender), Scott Tanaka (Owner of Pearridge Fender), Sonya Chong (GM of SH Fender), Russell Chang (Auditor and Analyst at GEICO), Joel Lu (Senior Appraiser at FICOH), and Marlene Spence (Lecturer at HCC) are just a few examples of alumni who are prospering in their perspective career fields.

Rapid advancements in automotive engineering and design seen today are clear examples that our collision industry is evolving faster than ever. The race in development of alternative fuels by manufacturers including EVs (Electric Vehicles) and HVs (Hydrogen Vehicles) is fundamental to help combat climate change. The advancement of safety systems and crash technology such as ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems) that include cameras, radar and sonar sensors are all designed to reduce the severity of auto accidents and reduce injuries. Innovative technology including AI (Artificial Intelligence), enhanced navigation systems, and the development of self-driving automobiles is driving our industry towards a new future. As these changes impact our State and the movement towards green technology comes into focus, advanced skills to develop our next generation of technicians are needed from our University of Hawaii system. To keep pace with these changes in vehicle design and construction we need to think about how we aim to prepare our students to face the challenges that we see in our immediate future.

An associate level degree and the development of a 4-year bachelor’s degree program is essential to the future success of the Collision Repair Industry and associated businesses. The program’s current Certificate of Achievement is intended to meet the goal of entry-level training to impact immediate shortages and provide immediate workforce stabilization. An enhanced two-year associate level program
can provide students with advanced technical training and industry recognized certification (ICAR) in specialized areas including refinishing (paint) technicians, plastic and sheet-metal (body) repair, and structural (frame/welding) repair as well as advanced electrical and mechanical systems. A four-year bachelor level program in automotive studies can offer careers in advanced industry related careers including administrative and managerial roles, accounting and finance functions, insurance agents, rental and service agents, estimator/appraisal positions, and many more. The career opportunities throughout the industry is wide ranging and the current demand to fill all of these types roles is very high.

The Automotive Body and Painting Association of Hawaii (ABPAH), established in 1959, is committed to ensuring the continued success of the Automotive Body Repair Programs at all University of Hawaii Community College campuses throughout the state. The collision repair industry has proven to be instrumental as an essential business during this unprecedented pandemic and we are committed as an industry to support the University of Hawaii Automotive programs and prevail through these hard-economic times that we face in our State.

Please accept this signed letter by our executive board and key members of our industry as our pledge to support this endeavor.

Michael Chong
Unibody Autotech Collision - President
ABPAH - President

Rob Collins
SH Fender Shop, Inc. - President
ABPAH - Vice President

Eddie Murai
Pacific Honda - Parts Manager
ABPAH - Secretary

Eric Takemoto
Island Concepts - Vice President
ABPAH - Treasurer

Brandon Okahara
Oka’s Auto Body - Vice President
ABAPH - Past President

Van Takemoto
Island Fender - President
ABPAH - Past President

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Having gone through the ABRP program here at HCC, I was able to gain a lot of knowledge and learn new skills. The program was definitely more than I had expected. As someone with a mechanical background, and having worked on cars, I was able to use some of what I had already known to my advantage, but little did I know I was in for a treat. I have learned a lot of new skills through the ABRP program that I never thought I would have learned throughout my life. The program teaches so much different aspects of the job and a multitude of opportunities within the auto-body industry. Some things that I liked about the program was that it is challenging compared to other jobs, it takes a lot of patience and attention to detail. It is an art form that takes years of practice to become good at it. Another thing was that we were able to learn some things that there are already programs for here at HCC, for example, welding, and sheetmetal practices. Autobody is more than just laying body filler on panels and repainting. Our teachers also brought it many people in the industry to share their experiences with us. It takes years of practice to become a skilled autobody technician, and although the program is only a year long, it is enough to get your foot in the door and open up different opportunities. If I could retake this course all over again for fun, I would hands down. I would definitely recommend this program to anyone and everyone.

-Craig Cayetano
HCC ABRP Program

My experience with the ABRP program at HCC wouldn't have been amazing if it wasn't for Marlene Spence and Dennis Pajela. They are amazing instructors, very knowledgeable, and take the time to make sure we learn and do our work. At the beginning of the course, I had no clue about the automotive collision industry. I had no clue on how to lay, and sand body filler on a panel. All I knew is that I was willing to learn and get the basics down. Ms. M and Mr. P did just that and even more. They were able to get us all together as a class and take a trip to Las Vegas for SEMA in 2019. That was very memorable for me because it was just amazing to see how big the convention was and see everyone with the same passion in one place.

At first when I decided to take this course, I just thought it would be like any other course I've taken in the past. But I was completely wrong. Taking this class, might've been the best choice I've made in my college career. I was able to find something I'm passionate about, I might be new to the trade but I'm willing to put the work in and learn for many more years to come. I want to thank Ms. M and Mr. P for being amazing teachers, that still keep in touch with us after we graduated. Thank you for making this class fun, yet still able to learn new skills that we need in the industry. Thank you for helping me find my passion and career, thank you for everything.

Sincerely,

Joshua Rafael
October 27, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Garrett Fujioka, Colby Koreyasu, and the ABRP Program we are writing this letter to help show how important this program is and how much it has helped us as a business and a family.

My husband Greg is a disabled veteran and never thought he would be able to work again due to his PTSD. In hopes of finding something that he could learn as a hobby we found the Auto Body Program at the Hawaii Community College here on the Big Island. My husband immediately showed an increase of daily motivation, excitement, and social skills while learning the trade from Garrett. He showed so much interest that as a family we decided this is something we can do! We decided to open our own business to help support our family.

With the support and guidance from both instructors we came up with a plan to get us started. My husband graduated in 2009 and we have really come so far in such a short time. We have used his knowledge in Auto Body to gain a contract with a local used car dealership to help out our local community with their auto repair needs. In fact we are so busy that just his knowledge is not enough to get through the workload, so I decided this year to take the class myself to help him in the shop.

My instructor is Colby and I feel so lucky to be able to work with him during these extremely hard times during Covid. In these last two months I have already learned so much that I am able to come back to our business after school and jump right in to working on cars. We are a family business and without it we would not be able to survive financially.

Without this program we would not be where we are today. I highly recommend this program to many people including our 13 year old son whom I hope will take over our business one day. For the future of the Auto Body trade, upcoming generations, and the many Veterans here in Hawaii I hope this program will continue to be apart of the Hawaii Community Colleges credited classes for many years. We are so thankful it!

Mahalo,

Billie Martinez and Gregorio Martinez-Dasalla

Owners of HI Five Auto LLC