Native Hawaiian nursing educator honored for creative contributions to public health

A University of Hawaii at Manoa nursing faculty member and alumna is the 2022 recipient of the Public Health Nurse Creative Achievement Award from the American Public Health Association (APHA). Michele Lani Bray, DNP, RN, PHNA-BC, assistant professor and program director of the Online RN to BS Program with the Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (NAWSON), was honored for her exceptional and creative contributions to public health nursing administration, education, practice or research at the APHA annual meeting in November.

Bray was recognized for her unwavering efforts organizing COVID-19 response activities. Her creativity, extensive knowledge of community, disaster and public health nursing, and vast professional network with community/public health workers in the state were a major asset during UH Manoa’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She provided leadership for multiple initiatives, including the Hawaii State Department of Health Point of Distribution mass vaccination operations.

Additional notable projects during the pandemic were assisting in the development of training modules for contact tracers as well as the just-in-time training modules for healthcare workers. These modules were utilized by all nursing schools in the state as programs struggled to prepare students to safely
manage care during the unfolding early days of the pandemic.

**Passion for Native Hawaiian health**

Bray is a Native Hawaiian scholar and registered nurse with more than 30 years of experience in pediatrics, community and public health and disaster management. She is passionate about working with the Native Hawaiian community to improve their quality of life and population health concerns by addressing the determinants of health of individuals, families and the broader community.

Bray said, “A sincere mahalo piha to the wonderful colleagues and experts that I have been fortunate to collaborate with over the years while at public health nursing and UH Manoa. The olelo that continues to guide me while working on new initiatives has been with me through the years. During the pandemic, the cliff became very steep, however, through the many hands involved assisting our state we overcame the challenges.”

‘A ‘ohe Pu ‘u Ki ‘eki ‘e Ke Ho ‘a ‘o ‘la E Pi ‘i
No cliff is so tall it cannot be climbed.

**Dedication to nursing education**

Bray has been with NAWSON since 2012 and in her latest endeavor, currently leads the Online RN to BS program. Launched in fall 2021, the program is designed to be an efficient bridge to earn a baccalaureate degree for associate degree in nursing and diploma nurses. The first class of 50 students graduated in May 2022. Bray also serves as nursing faculty for interprofessional teams in community settings and conducts simulation activities for students.

Beyond the classroom setting, Bray has provided educational opportunities at simulation labs, community parks, health centers, health fairs and homes of clients. She is an active member of the UH Manoa Nursing Alumni Association, as well as
other community service groups such as Honolulu Hawaiian Civic Club, Medical Reserve Corp and American Red Cross – Hawaii Chapter.

Bray earned her doctor of nursing practice and MS in nursing from NAWSON, her BS in nursing from Hawaii Pacific University, and her LPN from Kapiolani Community College.