

Hawaii's Path to Financial Literacy

By Elikapeka Funai, 11th grade student at Waiakea High School

As high school students get older, they will soon realize, no matter what field they are interested in, financial literacy will apply to them. Teenagers, by nature, have a spending habit, for example, Spotify, Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, etc. It is our job to learn about money while still in school because it makes our future so much easier on us. According to The Nation's Report Card, the state of Hawaii has received a D grade in high school financial literacy for the past three years. While this isn't as bad as many other states, teaching teens the importance of being responsible with their money can help pace them.

CU Hawaii Federal Credit Union has been partnering up with Waiakea High School for the past 20 years, teaching our youth financial literacy. They have given job opportunities to our business students and provided them with the knowledge and education they need to be successful and stable in their future.

Zippia.com says, nationwide, 73% of our teens want to gain more financial education. As a teenager, I understood the importance of this. However, I was also aware of the fact that, nowadays, it's not typically taught unless you purposefully put yourself in business/financial sectors.

I was personally offered a job as a student MSR (Member Services Representative) for our Waiakea student branch. This has given me the opportunity to meet new people, make connections, open my own bank account, and learn about what it takes to manage money. This has also opened my eyes to what it is like in the workforce in a professional setting. I've learned about deadlines, daily meetings, training, and all the different positions that make an institution, such as CU Hawaii, successful. At our branch, we have four MSR's in total with two teller lines. Students can come by and buy our merchandise, make a deposit, or make a withdrawal. This little set up we have makes it easy for teenagers to transition into adulthood by allowing them to take responsibility for their finances. It gives them the opportunity to get used to the financial system and doing transactions.

A lot of people develop unhealthy financial habits, and with CU Hawaii's presence on our campus, this can help minimize that and possibly prevent future problems and burdens such as financial fraud, debt, poor credit, or even bankruptcy. CU Hawaii makes it possible to learn regardless of your future interests because they understand that financial literacy is a *life skill*. No matter what career or job you choose to pursue you will need to know, one way or the other, about the importance of money management.

By holding activities on campus, such as our recently celebrated 20th anniversary, we have brought much attention to our cause. Students of all walks of life participated and learned more about what we have to offer and how they themselves can better their financial system.

CU Hawaii has made an incredible impact on Waiakea's campus and prepares teenagers with the right equipment to set them up for life. Our CU Hawaii student MSRs of the branch understand that the ability to be smart with their financial decisions, as well as being thoroughly educated on it, is a *life skill*. This skill is one many people lack or aren't completely confident in. Let's change that!

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