

# Thoughts to a Senator About CanSat -- What it Means to Me

The following article is based on selections from a letter written by Honolulu Community College student Robert Allen to his local senator about the CanSat Aerospace Student Competition.

For me, working on this project has brought so many benefits -- indeed, a project of this nature cannot help but benefit any student who has course work in either electronics or our CENT program. In addition, CanSat provides our non-electronic/computer students with a view of what goes into researching, designing, building and launching a satellite - on a smaller scale.

CanSat also provided a real-life application of the skills I learned through my programming course. As we move forward, the focus is now on hardware, as well as programming. Here I have benefited greatly, as well. I spent a few months during the summer researching and recommending electronic components for the CanSat. This task has continued through my electronics classes this semester, and I find that these classes are much easier to understand. Everything seems to make more sense. In addition, as the Student Coordinator for CanSat, I am learning many new skills in the areas of recruiting, coordinating, managing and organizing an "R&D" team, skills which will prove useful once I am working in my chosen field.

Aside from directly enhancing my learning experience here at HCC, my position as Student Coordinator for the CanSat team has also greatly changed my personal life. An opportunity came up near my 43rd birthday that would allow me to attend college all expenses

paid. Even though I had many doubts about returning to school, I jumped at the chance -- in my opinion, college would be the last chance in a life of wasted opportunities to prove to myself that I could do something useful with my life. When I walked on to the campus in the fall of 2004, I was pretty much a mess. I had no confidence in myself and in what I could accomplish, and my self-esteem was at an all time low. Shortly after starting my first semester, I met Professor Vern Takebayashi and Dr. Ron Takata, and became the Student Coordinator of the HCC CanSat program. The rest is history. I owe these two excellent mentors a great debt for the encouragement, wisdom and knowledge they have shared with me, and for helping me back on to the path of progress and functionality in my life. They have both exceeded the char-

ters of their positions many times over, and are instructors and teachers of the highest caliber.

As you can see, I benefit in many ways from my participation in the HSGC CanSat project. None of this would be possible without the support and funding of our legislators, and the support and dedication to our project that the excellent staff at the Hawaii Space Grant Consortium provides to us students. I am extremely pleased to have the honor and privilege of participating in the HSGC CanSat program and want to thank you for providing the funding for this prestigious program in support of basic science and engineering education through the passage of Public Law No. 109-108. I hope that the U.S. Congress will continue to support the contributions of the Hawaii Space Grant Consortium to basic science, technology, engineering, and mathematics literacy which is essential to our nation's success in the next century. ☺



*Robert Allen at the CanSat launch held by Kauai Community College*