Honolulu Community College Student Club HATS finishes fourth in the 2022 running of "At Large" Regional of the Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition

In March of 2022, a team of students from the Honolulu Community College (HCC) student club HATS placed fourth in the "At-Large" regional of the Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition (CCDC). The team consisted of students from the Computing, Security & Networking Technologies (CSNT) program at HCC. The CCDC "At-Large" regional cybersecurity competition included teams from two and four-year universities located in Hawaiʻi, Alaska, North and South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana. The top finishers, (1. South Dakota, 2. University of Alaska Fairbanks, 3. Montana Technical) are all universities which feature solid cybersecurity programs.

The CCDC is a two-day cybersecurity competition which focuses on the operational aspects of managing and protecting a commercial IT infrastructure. College teams consist of up to eight full-time students who operate as a Blue Team (Defenders). The White Team (Industry Judges) are responsible for giving students injects or tasks to be accomplished as well as grading their performance. The students are required to perform these tasks while a Red Team (Attackers) attempt to hack into their systems and cause havoc.

The HCC HATS team consisted of team captains, Noah Richardson and Sean Kagawa, along with team members, Koa Tomich, Laurence Jackson, Mhell Austin Servito, Shan Parmley, Jan Warren Olonan and Jaden Tyler. Team captain Noah Richardson notes, "Our experience at the CCDC taught us things we can't learn in a classroom. Relying on your teammates, performing after failure, and working under pressure are difficult things to teach. Events and places where students like the people on this team can meet and work together are no doubt a critical part of our education." Team captain Sean Kagawa notes, "The scoring for the competition is meant to mimic the IT-related needs of a small business. As such, maintaining up-time of services is critical to ensuring that the business can continue to operate. Any service that went down for more than ten minutes would result in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) violation that would cost the team an immense amount of points"

The National Finals for the CCDC is held in El Paso, Texas and is frequently attended by employers such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security and the National Security Association looking for high quality candidates for cybersecurity positions.

HCC CSNT Professor and Coach for HATS Aaron Tanaka states, "I was very proud of our students. With minimal guidance and a lot of hard work on their part, our student team was able to come together and perform well under very stressful situations. Considering that for each student this was their first time competing in this event and that they went up against collegiate teams with juniors, seniors and grad students, our students performed very well".