

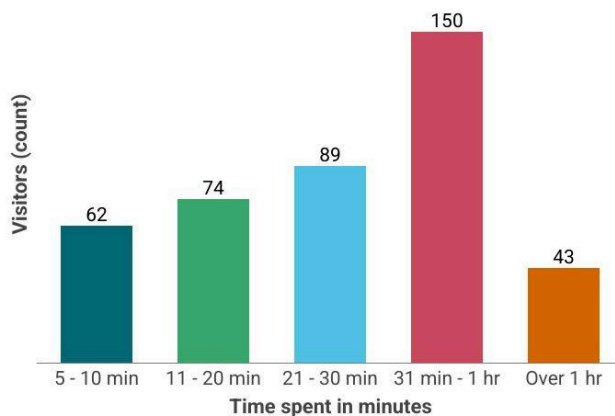
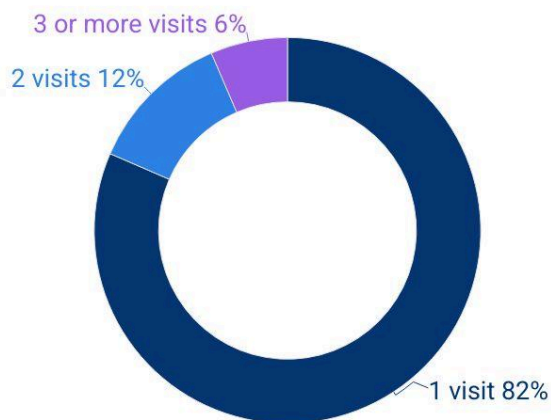
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: SENSORY ROOM REPORT

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Center on Disability Studies (CDS) and the OFDAS Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) launched a Sensory Room at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM), a first-of-its-kind initiative that aligns UHM with **55% of its peer institutions** offering sensory-friendly spaces. The sensory room is a controlled environment for self-regulation and stress management. Equipped with **13** sensory items, the room received a total of **477** visits with **357** unique visitors (**82%** students, **11%** faculty, **6%** staff, **1%** others) over **22** days of operation.

KEY FINDINGS

The findings are drawn from the **attendance** and **survey** data collected from October 2024 to May 2025. The survey explored visitors’ usage and experiences with a sensory room.

Usage Patterns



First-time visitors made up **82%**, a **7% increase** from Fall 24 to Spring 25. **12%** visited twice, and **6%** returned three or more times, suggesting sensory breaks became part of their weekly routine.

The highest number of visitors spent **31 min–1 hour** in the room, with **29 min on average** (students **30 min** and faculty **25 min** on average). Peak times occurred between 11 AM–12 PM and 1–2 PM.

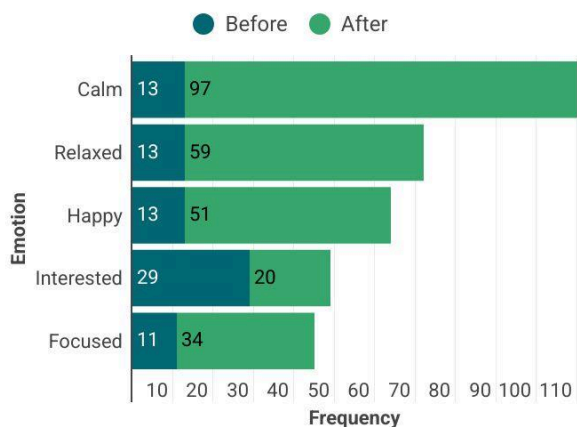
In Spring, visitors returning twice grew by **9.5%**, and **70.6%** for those returning three or more times (mostly students). This trend suggests that students incorporated sensory breaks into their routines.

Survey Feedback

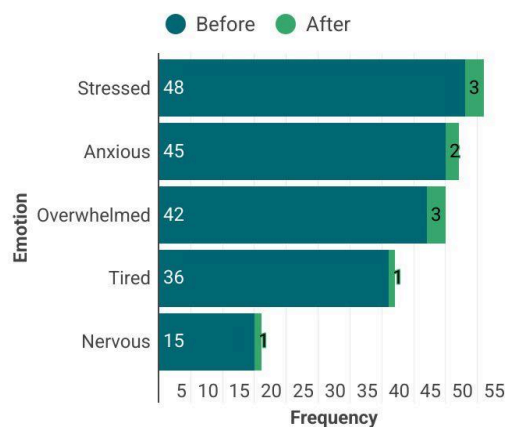
127 visitors (26% response rate) who completed the survey discovered the room primarily through **department emails (30%)**, **fliers (25%)**, and **friends (24%)**. Motivations included curiosity, a desire to explore a new campus space, and stress relief. Most used the space for **quiet reflection** and **emotional regulation**, while others who struggled to **focus** elsewhere on campus found it helpful for **studying**.

93% of respondents rated their satisfaction as either “**A lot**” or “**Quite a bit**”. **Touch, light, and color** sensory features received the **highest** ratings. Sound, video, and smell showed more variability, but were still positively perceived. The sensory room experience was consistently described as **calming** and **relaxing**, with **87% recommending** it to others.

Self-reported **emotional states** before and after the sensory experience revealed that positive emotions increased post-visit. Most respondents reported feeling **calm (80%)**, followed by **relaxed (48%)** and **happy (42%)**, while stress, anxiety, overwhelm, tiredness, and nervousness dropped significantly.



Top 5 Positive Emotions Before-After Visit.



Top 5 Negative Emotions Before-After Visit.



A word cloud showcasing the most frequently used words that described visitors' sensory experiences.



Finals are so stressful, I love coming in here to relax and forget about it for a brief moment until I go back into chaos.

The music and the ambiance helped me focus on getting assignments done.

It is fun to go to this safe place and play like a child.



Select student reflections on their sensory room experiences.

Guided Tours and Professional Development

The CAMP+U team led **6 guided tours** for **58** students and **7** faculty members. The 20-minute tours offered educational and hands-on learning experiences for personal and professional use.

Implications

These findings highlight the importance of **inclusive spaces** for the campus community, serving as a model for mental health and well-being initiatives. The UHM sensory room has proven to be a **vital resource for students**, which highlights the need for permanent sensory-friendly spaces on campus.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For any inquiries, contact Dr. Holly Manaseri, Principal Investigator, at hmanaser@hawaii.edu or visit the CAMP+U website at <https://cds.coe.hawaii.edu/campu/>.

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