

PROJECT HO'OKU'I SPECIAL EDITION SCHOLARSHIP NEWSLETTER

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**APPLY FOR A POST
HIGH SCHOOL
HO'OKU'I
SCHOLARSHIP!!!
INSTRUCTIONS**

PAGE 2

**MEET THE 2024-
2025 UHM
SCHOLARS
PAGE 4**

**MEET UHM FRESHMAN
AND SCHOLAR: ZOE
SMITH
PAGE 1**

Scholarship Edition

It's Not Just About the Money

In August of 2024, Zoe Smith, a recent graduate of Hāna High and Elementary School, embarked on a new chapter of her life at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. I recently sat down with Zoe to discuss her first semester of college and how the Ho'oku'i Scholarship and mentor program has helped her succeed. Zoe's transition to college life has been made significantly smoother, thanks to the Ho'oku'i Scholarship, which has not only covered all of Zoe's tuition this year, but has also provided her with a mentor, Aunty Misty. (continued on page 3.)

New!!! Post High School Competitive Scholarships for UH Hilo and CTE!

HO'OKU'I VI: E HO'OMAU POST-HIGH COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP



ABOUT PROJECT HO'OKU'I

Since its inception in 2009, Project Ho'oku'i has supported over 1,700 Native Hawaiian students. We are dedicated to supporting ALL Native Hawaiian students, including those with disabilities, those at-risk, and those identified as gifted and talented. The primary goal of the project is to increase enrollment in postsecondary degree and certification programs, ultimately leading to employment in fields where Native Hawaiians are currently underrepresented.

Project Ho'oku'i is based out of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's College of Education, Center on Disability Studies, supporting students through the Ho'oku'i Model, which includes:

1. Mentoring students on cultural, academic and career issues to develop postsecondary education and career goals
2. Preparing students to transition to postsecondary education through three-tiered supports groups
3. Individualized computer-based accelerated instruction in reading and math
4. Academic tutoring (by project staff or through University of Hawai'i's online services)
5. Financial assistance to cover college course tuition, fees, and required books
6. Supporting the well-being of students aligned with the Hawai'i Department of Education's Nā Hopena A'o (HĀ) Framework
7. Providing wraparound supports for gifted and talented students through opportunities in place-based learning, cultural identity, a'o, strengths-based mentoring, and professional development.

ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The first-year scholarship aims to support Native Hawaiian students in achieving their educational and career goals by providing financial assistance for tuition, fees, and required books. We are committed to fostering an environment of academic excellence and cultural pride, ensuring that students are well-prepared to contribute to their communities, the lāhui, and beyond.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Be an active Project Ho'oku'i participant in your junior/senior year of high school.
2. Have a minimum cumulative high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher.
3. Demonstrate financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
4. Apply and be admitted to the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa or a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at any of the University of Hawai'i Community College campuses.
5. Preference will be given to students of Native Hawaiian ancestry.
6. Preference will be given to Native Hawaiian high school seniors who completed their Associate of Arts (AA) degree upon high school graduation.

HOW TO APPLY

For more information or to apply for the Ho'oku'i VI: E Ho'omau Post-High Competitive Scholarship, active Ho'oku'i participants should the project website at: <https://cds.coe.hawaii.edu/hookui6hoomau/>

This application is designed to gather essential information about the student's background, academic achievements, and future aspirations, and will take between 20-30 minutes to complete. We encourage you to gather all the necessary documents (i.e., Resume, Personal Statement, and TWO Letters of Recommendations) before starting the application to ensure a smooth and efficient process.

...Continued from page 1



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The scholarship is designed to support students with financial assistance and guidance as they navigate the challenges of higher education. For Zoe, Auntie Misty has been an invaluable source of support, offering both practical and emotional guidance in her first semester.

"Auntie Misty helps a lot," says Zoe. "She's always checking in on you, helping you stay on track, and giving you someone to talk to when you need it." But Auntie Misty's role goes beyond just academic guidance; she is a steadfast support system in Zoe's college journey. "She helps with everything—whether it's figuring out registration, managing stress, or even dealing with things like homesickness," Zoe explains. "It's really comforting knowing someone has your back."

One of the most important lessons Zoe has learned from Auntie Misty is to advocate for herself. She is unafraid to ask questions and seek help. Auntie Misty has also given her the tools to succeed academically. "She encouraged me to stay on top of my assignments and to balance work with recreation," says Zoe. This advice has helped Zoe manage her workload more effectively, especially as she juggles her business courses along with extracurricular activities.

The transition from the quiet, rural lifestyle of Hāna to the bustling urban environment of Honolulu has been a big adjustment for Zoe, but Auntie Misty's mentorship has helped her feel at home. With her guidance, Zoe is confidently exploring Oahu, enjoying trips with her friends to different areas of the island. She's even learned how to navigate the city's public transportation system. Zoe credits Auntie Misty with providing a sense of security and stability in her first semester of college. "Having someone like Auntie Misty to talk to, especially during tough times, has made all the difference," she says. "She's like a bridge, helping me cross from my life in Hāna to my life here at the university. She's a safety net, and I really appreciate that."

With the support of the Ho'oku'i Scholarship and Auntie Misty, Zoe is not just surviving her college experience—she's thriving. She is embracing the opportunities that Oahu has to offer and is well on her way to achieving her academic and personal goals. For Zoe, the road from Hāna to the University of Hawaii at Manoa has been made much easier, thanks to the generosity of the Ho'oku'i Scholarship and the mentorship of Auntie Misty.

For the Ho'oku'i V Scholarship (Mānoa only) please visit:
<https://cds.coe.hawaii.edu/hookui5kulia/about/#resources>

For the Ho'oku'i VI Scholarship (Mānoa, UH Hilo, CTE) please visit:
<https://cds.coe.hawaii.edu/hookui6hoomau/resources/>



In the Words of the 2024-2025 Project Ho'oku'i Scholars...Their First Semester Experience at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

The 2024-2025 Project Ho'oku'i scholars interviewed for this article included Tyson Ayonayon, Rylee Sanches, Zhymmore Paguirigan, and Zoe Smith. They began the fall 2024 semester with a Mānoa campus tour and meeting with their new mentor, Native Hawai'ian Liaison, Misty Kela'i. "Aunty Misty", as she is known to the scholars, is a warm and welcoming advisor whom the scholars could reach out to when they needed help. All four students said their first semester was either a "good" or "great" experience. Tysen stated, "Being a Ho'oku'i scholar has definitely helped me more than just financially. The mentoring, support, and advice, definitely helped me through my first semester ... to complete three core courses in the Fashion Design track, and even a few electives that fulfilled some required ... courses. A huge mahalo to Ho'oku'i for all that they've done to support me in my first year journey."

The project is constructed so that each individual student develops and grows in personal as well as academic skills. Rylee shared, "I learned to ask for help when needed. [The project] gave me resources such as a job program. Lastly, I had people that could help me ... when I needed it."

When asked "what advice would you give to the seniors at your high school?" Tysen replied, "If I were to give a high school senior any advice, it would be to follow through with their goals and dreams, don't be afraid to be alone, don't give up when it gets hard, and apply for Ho'oku'i. I was able to grow independently with Ho'oku'i, alongside their (social) and financial support. I would definitely recommend Ho'oku'i to high school seniors, as the shift from high school to college is very intense, even if you had taken online college courses, being on campus and attending physical classes is much different than high school. With the support and mentoring from Ho'oku'i, the adjustment in your lifestyle will 100% go smoothly by your second year; you'll feel much more comfortable and confident with yourself and your goals."

Rylee's answer was short and powerful, "Don't be afraid to ask for help because that is what will help you succeed." According to Zhymmore, his recommendation is "have a planner, get your work done ... as soon as possible. Learn how to maintain a work life balance. College is a different workload than high school so learn how to balance all of that." And Zoe sums it up with, "The advice I would give to the seniors at my high school is to apply for every scholarship you can." For a featured article on Zoe Smith and her first semester experience, please see pages 1 & 3.



Left photo: 2024-2025 Project Ho'oku'i UH M Scholars, from left to right, Zoe Smith, Zhymmore Paguirigan, Rylee Sanches, and Tysen Ayonayon. Right photo: Native Hawaiian UHM Native Hawaiian Liaison and Mentor, Misty Kela'i.