

PROJECT HO'OKU'I SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2023



LANA'I HIGH SCHOOL MILESTONE

Talia Agliam received an undergraduate Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts in December 2022 from UHMC a semester **before** she graduated from high school in Spring 2023! She will continue her studies in the field of Sociology at UH Manoa in the fall funded by a Ho'oku'i V: Kulia i ka Nu'u Scholarship. Continued on page 2.

LANA'I HIGH SCHOOL MILESTONE

3 Lana'i High School Students Achieve their Associate's Degrees! (Pages 1 & 2.)

GO GOVS!

8 Seniors Receive their A.A. degrees before finishing high school. (Page 3.)

MOLOKA'I HIGH SCHOOL SUPER SCHOLARS

(Page 4.)

And more!!!

NA HOKU EDITION

Carl Padron with his proud 'Ohana.



Lana'i High School graduate, **Carl Padron**, received an undergraduate Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts for Spring 2023 from UHMC. He also earned the Seal of Biliteracy in Ilocano & Tagalog on his high school diploma. He is continuing his studies in Accounting and Finance at Menlo College.

Souina Seiuli, Class of 2023, received an undergraduate Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts for Spring 2023 from UHMC. She is continuing her studies in Psychology at Brigham-Young University in Provo, Utah.



All smiles, Souina Seiuli is covered in na lei as she reaches a milestone in her life.



Go Govs! 8 Farrington Seniors Receive their A.A. Degrees before Finishing High School!



Cadyn Ramos, Rachelle Manuel, Norine Quach, Rachel Tamapolu, Leilani Dela Cruz,, Kuileihoku McConnell, Jahren Pintor, Kailee Umaga-Silva, and Ho'oku'i Director, Lisa Uyehara.

Project Ho'oku'i, a U.S. DOE, NHEP grant-funded project, is housed in the UH Manoa College of Education, Center on Disability Studies. The project supported eight Farrington High School students to achieve a new milestone - finishing their A.A. degrees prior to high school graduation. Building upon 14 years of research, Project Ho'oku'i aims to increase the enrollment of Native Hawaiian students in postsecondary certification programs, and higher degrees that will lead to employment. Principal Investigator and Director, Lisa Uyehara, believes by removing the obstacles and barriers to higher education many first generation college-bound students can and will succeed. (continued on next page.)



**Kailee Umaga-Silva,
Class of 2023
Governor, will
attend Hawai'i
Pacific University in
the Fall of 2023.**

Through the Running Start, Jump Start, Early Admission, and Manoa Academy programs, the project supports high school students to meet the academic qualifications of these college programs while still in high school through mentoring, tutoring, and financial assistance dependent on the individual need of the student. Lisa attributes Project Ho'oku'i's success to the support of her hard-working team, her unit and college, project partner schools, UH System partners, and most of all the students. She stated, "We can provide guidance, support, and as many opportunities as we can, but at the end of the day, it is the student who must take the step towards the opportunities and work very hard."

The project also nurtures students' appreciation and aloha for Hawai'i's unique culture, traditions, and history in each iteration of Project Ho'oku'i since Project Ho'oku'i III: Na Kumu Alaka'i. Kailee Umaga-Silva, a 2023 Farrington High School graduate, set a goal of completing an associate's degree in liberal arts before graduating from high school, and succeeded. Dependent on a wheelchair since an incident in preschool, she is also determined to walk again and drive on her own one day. "This project helped me to develop my relationship with my Hawaiian culture. I've become more open to learning about my culture's history and its connection with the island."



Moloka'i High School Super Scholars

Moloka'i High School A.A. Degrees Conferred Upon 3 Seniors

Kahakuhailoa Poepoe received two undergraduate Associate's Degrees from UHMC in Spring 2023 - one in Liberal Arts and one in Hawaiian Studies. He plans to continue his Hawaiian Studies in a Bachelor of Arts program at UH Hilo.

Mahealani Bright-Wilhelm received an A.A. Degree in Liberal Arts in Spring 2023 from UHMC. She will continue her studies in the field of healthcare in Fall 2023.

Kailani Bicoy received an undergraduate Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts for Spring 2023 from UHMC. She plans to continue her studies in the field of healthcare in Fall 2023.



Moloka'i High School Award ceremony 2023.

The following Ho'oku'i students were the proud recipients of a variety of competitive scholarships awarded to Moloka'i High School graduates to support their future studies. The scholarships were presented at their scholarship awards ceremony Ho'omaka Hou (A New Beginning on Thursday, May 11th in the school library. The following are their names, and chosen career paths for their future studies in Fall 2023:

Tenley Akutagawa - UH Manoa, Psychology (Ho'oku'i V:
Kulia i ka Nu'u Scholar: \$12,000)

Kahenawai Hirata - UH Manoa, Psychology (Ho'oku'i V:
Kulia i ka Nu'u Scholar: \$12,000)

Mele Kaneali'i - Hamilton College NY, Public Policy &
Sociology (Questbridge Match: \$315,000)

Solomon Kikukawa-Teriong - San Diego Mesa, Physical
Therapy

Khyren Luuloa - Hawaii Community College, Business
Accounting

Raven Morris - WYOTECH, Advanced Diesel Mechanics

Sage-Marie Yamashita - San Diego State University,
Communications (Hawaii Community Foundation; Hawaii
Tourism Citizen Award)

Kira Kai Yamazaki-Gray - UH Hilo, Hawaiian Conservation
(Hawaii Community Foundation)

Ho'omaika'i 'ana!

2023 Awardees of the Project Ho'oku'i V: Kūlia i ka Nu'u Competitive Scholarship to University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

When Ho'oku'i Director, Lisa Uyehara, was conceptualizing the grant proposal for Ho'oku'i V and drawing upon her previous eight years' experience with Ho'oku'i II, III and IV, she decided to write in 10 competitive scholarships for UH Mānoa. She had noticed that the transition from high school to post-secondary education was not an easy one and that funding sources to continue education beyond high school was an obstacle for many Native Hawaiian students. A conversation with Hawai'inuiākea, Native Hawaiian Student Services Director, Willy Kauai, confirmed this observation. Happily, the grant was funded by the U.S. DOE, NHEP, and the project held a competitive application process for the scholarships in the fall of 2022. In April 2023, the first five students were notified of their scholarship awards. These included: Kamaile Aiu-Lee Loy, from Farrington High School, Evelyn Hera, and Talia Agliam from Lana'i High School, and Tenley Akutagawa and Kahenawai Hirata from Moloka'i High School.

Project Ho'oku'i V hopes to award 10 more scholarships to qualified students in 2024. The scholarship pays for in-state tuition and books at UH Mānoa covering their first year at UH's flagship campus. During this transitional period, the awardees are provided mentorship through Misty Kela'i, Project Ho'oku'i's Native Hawaiian Liaison. During this period of transition, awardees are also provided support from Native Hawaiian Student Services Center staff, as they build confidence and become akamai in navigating a research one level university campus. In the past, attrition for Native Hawaiian students was high – especially for first generation college students from rural areas. The staff of Project Ho'oku'i and its partners, hope these added layers of intervention will improve completion rates and enable project participants to successfully continue on their journey toward higher education.

Our first five awardees have already attained much success during their time in high school and all have big dreams and goals for their future careers. We encourage current Project Ho'oku'i seniors to apply for the 2024 Project Ho'oku'i V Competitive Scholarship to UH Mānoa. Priority is given to students who are of Native Hawaiian descent, students with disabilities, and students in need of financial assistance. A minimum cumulative high school GPA of 3.0, a scholarship essay, and 2 letters of recommendation must be submitted with the application. For more information, go to resources on the Project Ho'oku'i V website: <https://cde.hawaii.edu/hoookui5kulia/about/#resources> (cont. on next page.)

More about the awardees...

Moku o O'ahu

Kamaile Aiu-Lee Loy is a Farrington Governor (“once a Governor, always a Governor”). She graduated from high school in May 2023 and plans on majoring in psychology at UHM. During her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her ‘ohana, playing competitive volleyball, and dancing with her halau, Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima, under the direction of Kumu Hula Māpuana de Silva.



Moku o Lana'i

Talia Agliam was the valedictorian of her 2023 high school graduation class. She plans on majoring in sociology at UHM. She is a model student and has already earned her associate’s degree. She was also her class president at Lana’i High School and competed in the Miss Hawaii Teen USA pageant. Her ultimate career goal is to pursue a degree in law and become a family court judge.



Moku o Lana'i

Evelyn Hera has already earned 31 college credit hours during high school! She will begin her bachelor's degree program in Kinesiology Rehabilitation Science. She plans to go on to obtain a master's degree in occupational therapy and then return to her moku o Lana'i to share her knowledge, skills, and provide much needed physical therapy services to her community. Evelyn is a "can do" person; in her spare time, she enjoys sports, mentoring, and tutoring younger students and athletes. She has a strong work ethic, is dedicated to her studies and volunteerism, and has been a force in both her community and high school.



Moku o Moloka'i

Kahenawai Hirata earned 34 transfer college credits while attending Moloka'i High School. She will begin her bachelor's degree studies at UHM this fall in psychology. Her high school teachers describe her as hard working and determined. She is also willing to step out of her comfort zone to learn new things. While in high school she successfully completed a STEM internship at Sustainable Moloka'i through STEMworks.





Moku o Moloka'i

Tenley Akutagawa volunteers her time as an AYSO referee, beach clean ups for the LEO club, and helps at the food bank. She is a dedicated cross country track runner. She accumulated 19 college credits during high school and intends on majoring in psychology with the ultimate career goal of being a therapist.

Are you interested in becoming a Ho'oku'i participant or scholar? Please talk to your high school counselor and/or visit our website:

<https://cde.coe.hawaii.edu/hookui5kulia/>

With massive changes in the workforce underway, where will our future professionals come from?

The State of Hawai'i is suffering from a severe shortage of healthcare providers (doctors and nurses), teachers, as well as skilled career and technical employees. The need for professionals is even more dire in rural outer island communities, particularly in the fields of healthcare, education, automotive mechanics, as well as electrical and plumbing engineering. In 2022, job vacancies for healthcare workers increased to 76%, including 1,000 unfilled positions for registered specialty nurses, and between 710 to 1,008 for physicians (Dimaya, 2021). In August 2022, the public-school teacher shortage reached nearly 1,000 vacancies (Yip, 2022). These statistics are evidence of the urgent need to nurture our high school students and to inspire them to plan for college and a professional or technical career pathway.

Our latest Ho'oku'i Projects propose to address these professional and technical workforce shortages by building upon our current successful foundation. Project Ho'oku'i will continue to develop curricula and supports for gifted and talented Native Hawaiian students, as well as increasing financial assistance to students during that critical transition from high school to college. This includes mentoring supports that promote persistence in college, and expanding pathways to fields and professions where Native Hawaiians are underrepresented. To accomplish these goals, we have created partnerships with (1) Waikalua Loko I'a and its program of 'aina-based learning for students interested in environmental science and STEM careers; and (2) Hawai'inuakea School of Hawaiian Knowledge whose Native Hawaiian Student Services (NHSS) offers place-based learning, Native Hawaiian identity in the 21st century, a'o (simultaneous learning and teaching), strength-based mentoring, and exposure to research opportunities. (continued on the next page.)

Project Ho'oku'i V is inclusive assisting Native Hawaiian students who are at risk, students with disabilities, as well as students who are gifted and talented. We recognized during Ho'oku'i III that high achieving Native Hawaiian students often struggle with issues involving cultural identity in an academic setting, cross-culture code switching, lack of knowledge about the college application and financial aid process, and the belief that their only option to further their education and start their professional careers is to leave their beloved Hawai'i nei and go to the U.S. Mainland. We also recognized that even high achieving Native Hawaiian students face substantial challenges persisting in college, as reflected in their 50% drop-out rate without obtaining a degree (Weissman, 2022). Project Ho'oku'i V addresses this problem by supporting the potential of high achieving high school students to take advantage of the opportunity to enroll in community college courses. As a result, 14 students either graduated from high school having earned their Associate's degrees (we have one student who earned her A.A. during her Junior year of high school), with this number expected to increase to 25 participants by the end of 2024. Project Ho'oku'i V also promotes college persistence through a financial assistance pilot program. For 2023, five Ho'oku'i students, including four Native Hawaiians, will receive competitive scholarships for full in-state tuition and books for their first year at UH Manoa, as well as academic support and sense of belonging to make a smooth transition from their 'ohana and community. We expect to increase the number of UHM scholar awardees to 15 in 2024.