



A Message from Kenji Price and Mani Sehgal, Co-Leads of HPU's AI Task Force



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Innovation is about more than technology—it is about people, ideas, and the connections that create opportunity.

Hawaii Tech Week founded by Michael Bennett ‘12 (see Alumni Spotlight below) begins next week. The event brings together Hawai‘i’s local and global technology community to build relationships, share knowledge, and strengthen the state’s innovation ecosystem. Central to these conversations is artificial intelligence, which, of course, is also reshaping higher education’s academic programs, campus operations, and the roles and responsibilities of its workforce, along with nearly every profession our graduates will enter.

At Hawai‘i Pacific University, we believe artificial intelligence should enhance—not replace—the human experience.

AI has the potential to strengthen teaching and learning, improve how we serve students, and prepare graduates for an increasingly AI-enabled workforce. But technology alone is never the goal. Our focus is on using AI in ways that elevate critical thinking, creativity, ethical decision-making, and the meaningful relationships that define the HPU experience.

Full Message

Hawaii High School Students Take Ideas to Launch at HPU Entrepreneurship Bootcamp



Nearly 60 Hawai‘i high schoolers walked into HPU's Sunset Ballroom at Aloha Tower Marketplace on July 27 with an idea and a laptop. By Friday afternoon, they had honed their “why,” their target market, and solution, walking out with a nascent venture and live websites they had built themselves.

The free HPU x Blue Startups Entrepreneurship Bootcamp, held July 27 to 31 and sponsored by HPU's John F. Scarpa Entrepreneurial Pathway, brought together rising juniors and seniors from 18 public and private schools across the islands for five days of building. Working solo or in groups of two or three, students launched 40 ventures, each one identifying a business opportunity, designing a brand, building and publishing a live website (with AI tools), producing marketing assets and presenting the result to a panel of founders, mentors, and investors.

"What we saw this week is exactly why the Scarpa Entrepreneurial Pathway exists at HPU," said HPU College of Business Dean Amy Nguyen-Chyung, Ph.D., lead of the Pathway. "At the start of the week, the students formed an initial idea of their business opportunity and by Friday, they had built real websites identifying the problem and solutions and stood up in front of founders and investors to defend their work. This group went further by envisioning their target customer’s key characteristics with an empathy map and turning those target customers into a virtual business advisor using AI. I am so impressed by their work and presentation skills. Investing in developing youth entrepreneurship and leadership skills is a worthwhile way in which HPU and the Scarpa Pathway can engage with the community.”

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THE CURRENTS



HPU’s Cybersecurity Program Expands to Las Vegas

HPU’s Master of Science in Cybersecurity, the first and only program of its kind in Hawai’i, will expand to the University’s Las Vegas Campus in spring 2027. The program combines graduate coursework with industry-recognized certifications, preparing students for careers in a rapidly growing field. HPU Assistant Professor Cort Chambers, Ph.D., chairs the cybersecurity department.

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Journey to Peace Forum Features HPU Faculty Perspective

At the Journey to Peace Thought Leadership Speaker Forum on July 4, HPU history professor and Diplomacy and Global Security program director Russell Hart, Ph.D., joined U.S. Ambassador (Ret.) Jim Moriarty and U.S. Navy Capt. (Ret.) and former HPU visiting assistant professor Carl Schuster in a discussion on liberty, courage, and self-governance. The forum was moderated by U.S. Army Col. (Ret.) and HPU adjunct history faculty member John Hansen.

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HPU Hosts Symposium on Genki Ball Research

HPU hosted a July 17 symposium highlighting findings from a two-year study conducted with the University of Hawai’i that evaluated the effects of Genki balls on Hawai’i’s waterways. The event brought together researchers, educators, resource managers, and community partners for an afternoon of evidence-based discussion.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

HPU Alumnus Michael Bennett '12: A Tech Innovator Made in Paradise



HPU alumnus Michael Bennett '12 has been going to Sandy Beach since he was a young teenager. The beach sits on the southeast shore of Oahu, below Koko Head crater, where the Ka Iwi coastline runs open and unprotected and the sun comes up straight out of the water. The shore is legendary for its rough breaks. Waves quickly appear, crash over shallow sand, offering experienced, lifelong Sandy’s experts just a few seconds inside a barrel before it closes. Generations of bodysurfers and bodyboarders have tackled those waves, and many have the scars and memories of their bruises to prove it.

Alumni Involvement

The HPU alumni ‘ohana is worldwide, all opportunities are available in-person or virtually. We encourage you to consider how you can contribute your time and talents to support our students. Your involvement can have a lasting impact on student personal and professional growth.

HPU Connect

HPU Connect makes it easy to get in touch with fellow alumni and support current students. Every HPU member adds value and prestige to our community.

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Career Connections

Whether you're exploring options for the future or simply curious, our online tools will help you reflect on what matters most, explore giving possibilities, and take the next step, with aloha.

Bennett worked summers in construction and as soon as the day was done, he would swap out the jeans and toolbelt for a pair of Billabong boardshorts and DaFins. He still gets out when he needs a break from work, although less frequently than he’d like to.

"Riding that perfect barrel at Sandy's, there are few things as beautiful as that," Bennett said with a smile. “You can walk into the water, get barreled in 30-seconds, and go from having a horrible day into an amazing one. This is just one of the blessings of life in Hawai‘i.”

It is worth sitting on that image, because the wave asks for the same things Bennett has spent his entire career practicing. You have to see the set forming while it is still out past the horizon. You must commit before you are certain. And you cannot do any of it alone, because the water belongs to everybody. It is a fair description of what Bennett has built.

Honolulu Tech Week began in 2024, and the premise behind it was simple enough to fill a coffee shop napkin. Hawai‘i already has the talent, the capital, the ideas. What it lacked was a moment that put all three in the same place at the same time and use that as a flywheel to further develop future talent, initiatives, and investment.

Bennett had spent nearly a decade on the U.S. continent watching that moment happen elsewhere: in Miami, where he attended the first-ever tech week format in 2021 and later, and Los Angeles where the format turned whole cities into open-air conferences for a few days each year. He wrote a mission for the Hawai‘i version and kept it concise: accelerate talent, capital and adoption, to empower local people, grow the state's tech economy and build bridges to the rest of the world.

Two years later it carries a new name: **Hawaii Tech Week**, and a different order of magnitude.

The 2026 edition runs Aug. 31 through Sept. 6, built around more than 50 independently hosted events across 30-plus venues in Honolulu, with over 100 speakers and roughly 5,000 people expected to attend. There is no keynote hall and no single stage. Companies and community leaders host their own gatherings, attendees register for the ones they want, and for seven days the city works as one distributed campus. Past speakers have included Canva Chief Evangelist Guy Kawasaki, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi, State Chief Information Officer Christine Maii Sakuda, and Privateer Space CEO Alex Fielding.

Where it goes from here is the part Bennett argues for with the most conviction. He believes the next decade will set the course of the century given the rapid pace of acceleration, especially around code, intelligence, and their applications to not only knowledge work but the physical world.

“I’d like to see Hawai‘i become more prosperous, clean and green, and building for a technological future while staying rooted in tradition and nature. Hawaii Tech Week is where the people, companies, and institutions building a better future with technology come together." said Bennett.

Full Article

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Planned Giving

Whether you're exploring options for the future or simply curious, our online tools will help you reflect on what matters most, explore giving possibilities, and take the next step, with aloha.

[Learn More Here!](#)

HPU Athletics

Learn more about our teams, game schedules, standout student-athletes, and how you can support HPU Athletics all season long.

[Learn More Here!](#)

Upcoming Events:

Transforming Communication Barriers into High Performance with Natsuyo Nobumoto Lipschutz
Thursday, September 10th
9:00 a.m. PDT
[More Info Here](#)

How Companies Can Optimize Talent & Support Dual-Career Families featuring Dr. David Smith & Dr. Brad Johnson
Wednesday, September 23rd
9:00 a.m. PDT
[More Info Here](#)

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