

KAI ULU

HPU Alumni Currents

Happy Holidays from HPU President John Y. Gotanda



HPU Celebrates Fall 2025 Commencement of Firsts

HPU celebrated its fall 2025 graduating class yesterday with two ceremonies at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. in the Coral Ballroom at [Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort](#). Nearly 700 students earned their degrees in this year's ceremonies.

In a commencement of firsts, HPU recognized the following milestones:



- 133 Master of Business Administration (MBA) students from China earned their degrees, the first cohort to graduate through the Beacon Education–HPU partnership. The program is delivered fully online, entirely in Mandarin Chinese.
- 36 Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) students earned their degrees, the first cohort ever to earn OTD degrees in Hawai‘i.
- Two students in HPU's Master of Science in Construction Management (MSCM) program earned their degrees, the first cohort to graduate from the construction management master's program, which launched in fall 2024.
- Five former dual-credit high school students from Kamehameha Schools, who graduated in 2023 having already earned their Associate of Arts (AA) degrees from HPU through the university's dual-credit partnership, graduated with their MBAs, a first for HPU.

Undergraduate valedictory speakers were [Sophia Siangco](#) and [Jejomar Balanay](#).

Graduate valedictory speakers were [Shanicqua Carter](#) and [Joshua Fontaine](#).

HPU President John Gotanda, J.D., delivered remarks and conferred degrees, and Acting Senior Vice President and Provost Brenda Jensen, Ph.D., served as Master of Ceremonies.

Both ceremonies were live streamed and are available on-demand,



THE CURRENTS

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THE CURRENTS



Honoring Land and Community through 'Beyond the Cap' Service Day

Students visited Kauluakalana at Ulupō Heiau State Historic Site in Kailua for a day of cultural learning, community restoration, and connection to 'āina (land). The semesterly "Beyond the Cap" event, organized by Student Government Association and Sharks United, offers graduating seniors and their peers a meaningful way to mark their academic journey.

[Learn More](#)



HPU Takes First Place in International Collegiate Programming Contest

HPU placed first in Hawai'i at this year's International Collegiate Programming Contest, Pacific Northwest Region in Division I, contending against the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and BYU Hawai'i. HPU has won the top spot 14 times out of 23 Hawai'i contests, a remarkable accomplishment that has not been matched by any other university in Hawai'i.

[See Here](#)



Spotlight on Faculty Lisa Chuang: Rhetoric, Resilience, and the Future of Communication

Associate Professor of Communication and Department Chair Lisa Chuang, Ph.D., brings a diverse and multi-faceted background to her teaching. From classical music to Peace Corps service, her experiences shape a distinctive approach to media strategy, mentorship, and the ever-changing digital landscape.

[Click Here](#)



HPU Joins Statewide Celebration of National Nurse Practitioner Week

HPU nursing faculty and students joined statewide colleagues in November to celebrate National Nurse Practitioner (NP) Week, emphasizing NPs' vital role in expanding access to care. Gov. Josh Green welcomed nursing leaders, including HPU School of Nursing Dean Edna Magpantay-Monroe, Ed.D., APRN, to the Capitol for a proclamation recognizing NP Week.

[Click Here](#)



HPU's MBA Is Hawai'i's Top Choice for Business Professionals

HPU's Master of Business Administration program is Hawai'i's most selected MBA. More current and future business leaders are choosing HPU for its flexible design, skills-based curriculum, and accessible curriculum offering courses both online and in the classroom.

[Read More](#)



Faculty Jana Cason to Serve on the American Occupational Therapy Foundation Board

HPU Professor and Director of Scholarship in the Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program – Honolulu Jana Cason, DHSc, OTR/L, FNAP, FAOTA, has been elected to the Board of Trustees of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation. Her three-year term begins January 2026.

[Learn More](#)

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

HPU Alumnus Paul Gene '02: Leadership in Motion



HPU MBA alumnus Paul Gene '02 stood at the front of an HPU College of Business classroom in fall 2025 as a guest speaker, looking out at a room full of students leaning forward in their seats. On the board behind him, he wrote two simple words in neat block letters: Zero Defects (ZD).

"I learned this in a semiconductor factory in Seoul," Gene told the class, drawing a small dot and circling it. "Fifty defects per million (DPM) units was considered a good month. That mindset, quality, attention to detail, and taking responsibility, is the same mindset you need to build a company, lead a team, or serve a customer."

For nearly an hour, Gene shared how those lessons in quality, persistence, and vision carried him from a boyhood in South Korea, to Laie, to Downtown Honolulu, and eventually to founding North Shore Beach Bus, one of Hawai'i's top-rated tour companies. His stories were practical and inspirational, the kind of real-world leadership insights he once went searching for as a graduate student at HPU.

"I chose HPU because the faculty members are connected in the real world," said Gene. "Professors are working in the industries we want to learn. It's not just theory. You get to learn firsthand from people who are doing the work."

Long before he was a guest lecturer at HPU, Gene was a teenager in Jeonju City, South Korea, about a two-hour bus ride from Seoul. He attended the city's top-ranked high school, where entrance exams and national rankings shaped long evenings of studying and high expectations at home. He dreamed of attending the national military academy, but when he did not pass the highly competitive entrance exam and another university path did not feel right, he completed three years of mandatory military service and began to look outward.

Gene set his sights on the U.S. and threw himself into preparing, studying intensely, passing an English proficiency test, and mapping out the next step. But the timing wasn't right. With new responsibilities at home, he chose a practical path forward: he stayed in South Korea and found a position at a semiconductor manufacturing company in Seoul, using his strong English reading and writing skills to work with global clients like Intel and Motorola.

He learned the rigor of quality control and statistical thinking, how small errors add up, how systems hold (or fail), and how discipline becomes a kind of leadership. Those lessons stuck.

[Full Article](#)

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.

[Sign Up Today!](#)

Career Connections

Networking, mentorship opportunity, and continued involvement with the HPU campus.

[Learn More Here!](#)

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:

How to Enhance Workplace Culture, Relationships, and Retention

Thursday, January 8th
9:00 a.m. PST

[More Info Here](#)

How Food, Mood, and Mindfulness Transform Wellbeing

Thursday, January 15th
9:00 a.m. PST

[More Info Here](#)

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