

KAI ULU

HPU Alumni Currents



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Alumni Spotlight: Three Generations, Within Walking Distance

When HPU alumnus Eric Axelbank thinks about his alma mater, he can still picture the Honolulu he knew as a young man. Aloha Tower Marketplace would not open until 1994, and HPU students would not move in until 2015. Looking to Diamond Head, the view ran low and clear across Kakaʻako, past warehouses and machine shops, with almost nothing tall enough to interrupt it.

Eric's parents had bought an apartment at Harbor Square on Ala Moana Boulevard, close enough that he could walk to class. It was convenient. It was also, though he could not have known it then, the middle chapter of a story that would run through three generations of his family at HPU.

[Full Message](#)

A Message from HPU President John Y. Gotanda



A new generation begins their journey at HPU!

THE CURRENTS



HPU Launches Hawai'i's First Collegiate Surf Team

Hawai'i invented modern surfing. Next spring, HPU will welcome its inaugural surf team to campus, the first university to officially make surfing a sport in Hawai'i. The Surf Team will compete under advisement of HPU Athletics and will participate in the 2027 National Scholastic Surfing Association (NSSA) Championship. "This is a historic moment for HPU Athletics and for surfing in Hawai'i," said HPU Executive Director of Athletics Debbie Snell, Ed.D.

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A Look Inside HPU's Master of Arts in Sustainability

The HPU Master of Arts in Sustainability (MASUST) program, the first and only graduate program of its kind in Hawai'i, has some big news. In July 2026, the program received initial accreditation from the Sustainability Education Accreditation Commission (SEAC), making it the first sustainability program in the country to earn the five-year award.

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HPU Hosts Hawaii Tech Week Panel on Developing an AI Strategy

On Sept. 2, HPU hosted a sold-out panel discussion on artificial intelligence strategy at its Aloha Tower Marketplace campus, drawing faculty, staff, students, and community members. The event was part of the third annual Hawaii Tech Week, sponsored by HPU and founded by HPU alumnus Michael Bennett, who attended.

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HPU's Las Vegas Campus Celebrates Inaugural Doctor of Occupational Therapy Students

On Aug. 26, HPU's Las Vegas Campus celebrated its first cohort of 22 Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) students completing their degrees, setting a milestone for the University's growing health sciences presence. The students now move toward licensure and careers in occupational therapy.

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HPU Delegation Shares Indigenous Higher Education Frameworks in Chile

Master of Social Work candidate Renée Rivera, Marine Biology senior, President of the HPU Indigenous Student Alliance, and Vice President of the HPU Asian American and Pacific Islander Club Annalysa Dumlao, Geography and Urban Sustainability professor Serge Marek, Ph.D., Cinematic Multimedia Arts professor Pete Britos, Ph.D., and Social Work professors.

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HPU's New Kōkua Center Opens at Aloha Tower Marketplace

The start of the fall 2026 semester is less than a week away, and HPU's newest resource at Aloha Tower Marketplace is open and available to all students. The Kōkua Center, located in the center atrium adjacent to the HPU Barnes and Noble Bookstore and MPR 3, is designed with student success in mind, welcoming new and continuing students in to answer questions about HPU and about living in Hawai'i.

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