

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

SNAPSHOTS IN TIME

A deep dive into
the UH photo archives

PG. 16

AT THE FOREFRONT OF AI

How UH is shaping the future
of artificial intelligence

PG. 12

HONORING CAREGIVERS

Alumna producer's heartfelt
film goes global

PG. 20

SUMMER 2026



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Contents

SUMMER 2026



A play inspired by the Lahaina fires, "Lele Wale" is written and directed by Ikaika Mendez, featuring a cast of actors and dancers.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 5 **NEWSMAKERS**
UH campuses and students make headlines.
- 8 **Q&A**
Da Pidgin poet laureate answers our questions.
- 10 **CAMPUS UPDATES**
A roundup of openings and future plans.
- 11 **BOOKS**
Hilo-born Jasmin 'Iolani Hakes's latest novel.
- 15 **STUDENT PROFILE**
JABSOM student's dedication to gerontology.
- 19 **FASHION**
Designer Matt Bruening embraces palaka.
- 20 **ENTERTAINMENT**
Alumna's independent film goes global.
- 22 **SPORTS**
Anthony Carter's basketball journey, tennis pro Andre Ilagan and more.
- 26 **MILESTONES**
Five-star hotelier Tim Lee makes guests feel at home.
- 28 **FOOD**
Chef Keoni Regidor receives restaurant recognition.
- 30 **WHAT'S MY JOB**
Michael Willett on the aeronautics maintenance program.

FEATURES

- 12 **AT THE FOREFRONT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**
How UH is integrating AI across its campuses, while building frameworks to guide its ethical use.
- 16 **A TIME CAPSULE IN PHOTOS**
A deep dive into the archives uncovers images documenting the university's early years.

ON THE COVER

Students come and go from the Gregg M. Sinclair Library in 1966. The photo was taken by Masao Miyamoto, who was the university's official photographer from 1936 to 1977.

Photo courtesy Miyamoto Photo Collection, U. of Hawaii Archives

ALOHA TO OUR UH ALUMNI AND 'OHANA

A S I REFLECT ON MORE THAN A YEAR OF SERVING AS YOUR PRESIDENT, I AM DEEPLY MOVED BY THE TREMENDOUS DEDICATION AND SPIRIT OF OUR UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I COMMUNITY. Nothing we achieve happens alone; we are a team. Across our 10 campuses and five educational centers, it is vividly clear that UH has a profound and special relationship to Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians. We are anchor institutions in our communities, and the work we do matters deeply to the future of our Islands.

Higher education faces unprecedented change, with shifting demographics and a landscape of federal policy shifts. However, our strategy is resolute: we are playing offense, not defense. We are moving our strategic agenda forward by leaning into innovation and organizing at scale. A central pillar is meeting our state's workforce needs: building an integrated ecosystem with employers, infusing vital skills into the curriculum, and creating universal experiential learning to keep our programs relevant and grounded.

Our proactive, innovative spirit shines brightest in our approach to artificial intelligence (AI), which you will explore in this issue. AI is revolutionizing nearly every profession, and we are choosing to lead this transformational change rather than simply react to it. Generative AI is like the invention of electricity — it touches everything. Universities that do not embrace this emerging technology risk becoming less relevant to the students and communities they serve. Failing to do this right risks creating the biggest equity divide ever known.

At UH, we are leveraging AI to strengthen teaching, research and institutional efficiency. This technology is profoundly changing what and how we teach. We have launched a new Office of Academic Technology to guide a coordinated, systemwide strategy. We are preparing our students not just to succeed, but to shape the AI-enabled world with responsibility, stewardship and service to Hawai'i. We are ensuring ethical integration, grounded in Native Hawaiian principles such as mālama 'āina, to establish UH as a Pacific leader in culturally rooted AI.

At the heart of these visionary initiatives is our unwavering commitment to student success. We are actively removing barriers. Our Direct2UH program provides seamless admission for public high school seniors, resulting in impressive percentage increases in applications from first-time freshmen for fall 2026 — up 127% at UH West O'ahu, 59% at UH Hilo and 5% across the UH Community Colleges. We use AI for retention, deploying predictive analytics and chatbots that have already handled more than 100,000 student texts, providing high-touch interventions exactly when needed. We remain a beacon of affordable excellence: two in five UH students attend without paying tuition, and approximately 80% of our graduates enter the workforce with zero student debt.

Our alumni are a vital part of this journey — the living proof and greatest ambassadors of a UH education. I invite you to stay connected, share your expertise, and help us mentor the next generation as we elevate the value of higher education and the University of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your unwavering support and for being a part of our UH 'ohana.

Wendy Hensel

President, University of Hawai'i



MYTH DEBUNKED

A new UH study disproves a long-held myth that early Native Hawaiians over-hunted native birds to extinction, instead finding no scientific evidence to support that claim. Researchers analyzed fossil records and paleoecological data from Hawaii’s waterbird populations and found that declines were more likely tied to environmental shifts, including habitat change and the later introduction of invasive species and disease. The study suggests that the bird populations mostly changed either before Polynesian arrival or after Western contact.



UH West O’ahu took part in UH Giving Day.

DONORS DELIVER

On April 8, the 24-hour UH Giving Day fundraising effort brought in a record-breaking \$1.3 million. Across all 10 campuses, students, alumni, faculty, staff and community members participated in the systemwide effort, which supports scholarships, student programs, research and urgent needs, including Kona Low flood relief. From sign-waving events and a ping pong tournament to a pop-up market, social media campaigns and matching gift challenges, activities helped encourage participation throughout the day. The results reflected broad campus engagement and a shared commitment to expanding access and opportunity.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII; GETTY IMAGES



OCEAN WAVES OFFER CLUES TO KĪLAUEA

THE VOLCANO SHOWED SIGNS OF DISRUPTION BEFORE ITS 2018 ERUPTION

by **CHRISTINE HITT**

ONE YEAR BEFORE THE MASSIVE 2018 ERUPTION AND SUMMIT COLLAPSE, KĪLAUEA VOLCANO WAS BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY DEEP UNDERGROUND. A UH study, published last year, found evidence that the volcano may have been quietly signaling changes through seismic energy generated not by earthquakes, but by the ocean itself.

Researchers believe a disruption in the volcano’s plumbing system altered how magma flowed, shifting pressure sideways away from the summit toward the East Rift Zone.

“There’s other scientific evidence that Kīlauea’s plumbing system was interrupted, either between the summit or at the Middle East Rift Zone near Pu’u’ō’ō” says Sin-Mei Wu, assistant professor in the Department of Earth Sciences at the UH Mānoa School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology. The research was done in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Miami and the University of California, San Diego.

Instead of relying solely on earthquake activity, the team analyzed seismic waves continuously produced by ocean surf striking Hawai‘i’s coastlines.

“The ocean waves are ubiquitous natural energy sources especially on Hawaiian Islands, which create a constant supply of seismic energy that allows us to track the status of Kīlauea’s magma plumbing system over time,” Wu explains. “When magma moves underground, it changes the pressure within the plumbing system that alters the surrounding rock matrix.”

That constant signal could help scientists better monitor periods when volcanoes are not erupting and appear to be quiet.

“Kīlauea is highly active. In the past, we have learned a great deal during periods when the volcano produces prominent, detectable seismicity and ground deformation,” Wu says. “However, subsurface activity continues even in the absence of clear surface signals. Developing methods to illuminate these processes is therefore essential for improving our understanding of the volcano’s internal dynamics and, ultimately, our ability to predict eruptions.”



CLEAN SWEEP

The UH Mānoa men’s and women’s swimming and diving teams swept the 2026 Big West Championships in Houston, Texas, securing dual title sweeps for the two programs. The men edged Grand Canyon University by less than 3/100ths of a second in the 400 freestyle relay to secure their championship with 780 points. The women dominated on the final day with a 110-point lead and finished with 798 points, more than 100 ahead of University of California, Davis.

FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER

UH IS STRENGTHENING TIES BETWEEN STUDENTS AND HAWAII’S WORKFORCE

by **CHRISTINE HITT**



AIMED AT KEEPING LOCAL TALENT in Hawai’i and addressing longstanding labor shortages, workforce development became one of the UH System’s four major priorities under its 2023–2029 strategic plan. Since then, the university has expanded efforts in career readiness, internships and employer partnerships statewide.

“We know, for example, that paid internships — students who have one or more paid internships while they’re in college — have a significantly reduced chance of being underemployed,” says Christine Beaulé, UH System’s director of workforce development.

Beaulé says UH already has strong workforce pipelines in programs such as nursing, education and technical trades, but some students in other majors may still lack a clear career trajectory. She is working to strengthen pathways across all disciplines so students can more easily connect their degrees to workforce

opportunities after graduation.

“We don’t know a lot about the outcomes in roughly half of UH programs,” says Beaulé. “A student with a degree in biology, for example, if they’re not going to med school, what are they going to do with that degree? Are they going to be using that degree in a workplace setting where what they’re learning in the biology curriculum is directly relevant?”

The goal is to improve understanding of student outcomes across all programs and better align academic pathways with workforce needs. Earlier this year, UH joined state agencies, business organizations, lawmakers and philanthropic groups in launching the “Generational Workforce Commitment,” a long-term effort focused on improving career opportunities and reducing the outmigration of local residents.

“We’re all interested in keeping kama‘āina home,” Beaulé says.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BIG WEST; KEOLA DONAGHY



KITCHEN CREDENTIALS

Forty-one students from Kapi'olani, Kaua'i and Leeward Community Colleges earned the Bronze Certification of Cooking Skills for Japanese Cuisine in Foreign Countries, a first for Hawai'i and only the second time the program has been offered in the U.S. Backed by Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and led by Chef Takeshi Suda of Yamagata Prefecture, the program trained students in knife skills, fish preparation, seasoning and presentation.



Previous page: The UH Mānoa's men's and women's swimming and diving champions. Above Right: Receiving the album award were Institute of Hawaiian Music director and producer Keola Donaghy; students Bobbi Bridges, Mehra Park, Aaron Grzanich, Mākena Laurion and Grace Gomes; producers Lance D. Collins and Stephen Fox, a UH Maui College music and psychology lecturer.



SONGS OF LAHAINA

Students and faculty at UH Maui College won a 2025 Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award for an album celebrating West Maui through song. Created in the college's Institute of Hawaiian Music, the album "Ha'ina Ko Wehi: Celebrating West Maui in Mele" was named Compilation Album of the Year. The project was originally meant to celebrate the region through music, but shifted focus after the Lahaina disaster as students wrote original mele reflecting loss, healing and hope for the community's future.



ROYAL BITES

Although King's Hawaiian, which traces its roots to Hilo, is known nationally for its widespread grocery store presence, the opening of King's Hawaiian Grill at the UH Mānoa Campus Center food court in September marked the company's only restaurant location in Hawai'i since it moved operations to Los Angeles in 1977.

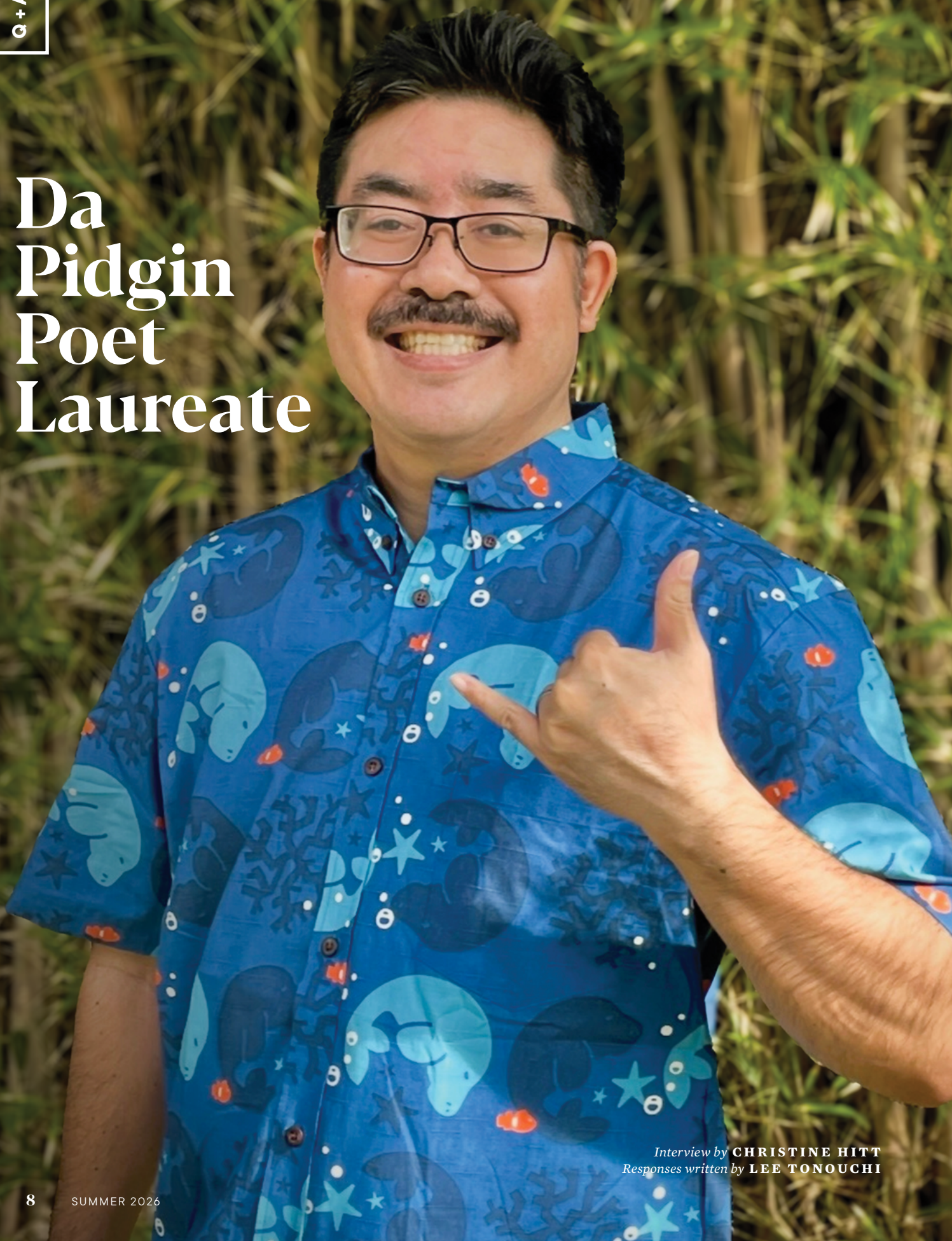
On the grill's menu are five kinds of burgers, including the Warrior cheeseburger with a 7-ounce ground sirloin patty on a toasted King's Hawaiian sweet hamburger bun, a Southern fried chicken sandwich, crispy chicken tenders and fries.

BETTER BATTLE

UH Mānoa researchers at the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience are working on new ways to control the invasive coconut rhinoceros beetle, which is killing palm trees and other plants. In a collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, UH received a permit to test a virus that infects and kills the beetles in their early life stages, as a safer alternative to pesticides. Early results suggest the virus could help reduce beetle populations without harming other insects or the environment.



Da Pidgin Poet Laureate



Interview by **CHRISTINE HITT**
Responses written by **LEE TONOUCHI**

▼

In February, Lee Tonouchi (BA '95, MA '97, UH Mānoa), the acclaimed Pidgin writer known as “Da Pidgin Guerrilla,” was named Hawai‘i’s poet laureate by the Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, the Hawai‘i Council for the Humanities and the Hawai‘i State Public Library System.

His work spans books, poetry and plays, including two new projects debuting soon. His play “Our Okinawan Ohana: Stories We Share from Hawai‘i’s Uchinaanchu Community” arrives this fall from PlayBuilders of Hawai‘i, while Ohana Arts is adapting his children’s book “Okinawan Princess: Da Legend of Hajichi Tattoos” into a musical in 2027.

WHAT ROLE DID PIDGIN PLAY IN YOUR LIFE GROWING UP?

Like planny Local people Pidgin wuz my firstest language, but I nevah even know I talked Pidgin until teachers would “correck” me. Den I wuz force for not use Pidgin, cuz oddahwise teachers wuz going go all red pen crazy on top my papahs. But den in college at UH, aftah seeing Local literature for da first time, I started taking some creative writing courses so I could try write Pidgin. Den eventually I wuz all like, if I can do my creative stuff in Pidgin, hakum I no can do my critical stuff in Pidgin too? So I started doing my short response papahs in Pidgin, den my five-page papahs in Pidgin, den 30-page research papahs in Pidgin, eventually all my work, I did everyting all in Pidgin.

My tinkings wuz that da Pidgin talker stay perceive as being not intelligent as da English talker. So da way I saw ‘em wuz I had two choice den. I could either change myself or I could try change da perception. I wen decide for dedicate my life to trying for change people’s perceptions about Pidgin.

WHAT FIRST MADE YOU WANT TO ADVOCATE FOR PIDGIN?

Teachers used to tell me I write like how I talk. So I said, “Oh, das good ah!” Den dey said, “No, that’s bad.” I no could understand hakum I no could use words like da kine, bumbye, try like, hammajang. Cuz in da world around me, all these words wen exist. So writing always felt like wuz fo’ fake to me. An’den I remembah small kid time, when my Maui Grandma used to come visit O‘ahu, she always wanted me for order her food for her wheneva we ate out at restaurants cuz she told me she wuz shame of her Pidgin.

My Maui Grandma had so much for be proud of an’den. She wuz one plantation worker and she wuz one of only two women irrigators in all of Maui. And she got da job cuz she fought for ‘em, she had to ask for da job. So she wuz one very strong woman who advocated for herself. Seeing her feeling all shame li’dat, I remembah it made me feel really sad.

HOW DID YOUR TIME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SHAPE YOUR ADVOCACY FOR PIDGIN?

Back in da ‘90s, I took English 256: Poetry and Drama from Rob Wilson. He no wuz from hea, but he felt wuz important for incorporate Hawai‘i literatures as part of his curriculum. Along with Shakespeare and Faulkner, he wuz also using one Local literature textbook called “The Best of Bamboo Ridge.” Inside dea we wen study one Pidgin poem called “Tutu on da Curb,” written by Eric Chock. For me wuz mind blowing. Wuz my first time seeing Pidgin in literature. I wuz all like, “Ho, get guys writing in Pidgin... and we studying ‘em in college... das means you gotta be smart brah for study Pidgin!” And das what started me on top my journey. All my oddah non-English major friends who went UH same time as me, dey went their whole college careers and dey nevah get no Local literature. So I wuz very fortunate I wen go take from da cool Professor.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE PERCEPTION TOWARD PIDGIN SPEAKERS HAS CHANGED SINCE YOU WERE A KID?

I tink so still get prejudice against Pidgin, but da ting stay mo’ covert now. Whereas back in da day wuz considered socially acceptable for be all overtly anti-Pidgin, li’dat.

IN WHAT SPACES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PIDGIN USED MORE?

Pidgin stay like gravy, brah. I like ‘em all ova!

BEING SELECTED AS HAWAII’S POET LAUREATE IS A HIGH HONOR. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?

Early in my writing career one famous Local writer who I wen look up to recommended I lose da Pidgin if I eva wanted for be successful. So I wuz all like should I change da way I write o’what? Cuz I really wen admire dis big time writer. So I thought about ‘em for two seconds den I said “NAH, I going show you, famous writer!” So what does being Hawai‘i’s Poet Laureate mean to me? It means I can tell that famous writer, “Wop yo’ jaws!” And I feel like I stay also representing da Pidgin people, and we showing alllll da naysayers. It’s not no can. It’s no... CAN!

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING DURING THE THREE-YEAR TERM?

We stay slowly figuring out da plan. Generally I like work with da kine marginalized kine communities for help encourage people for find their voice. Cuz as one Pidgin poet I know how feels like for grow up and have oddah people tell you that your voice no stay good enough.

WHAT DO YOU WANT OTHER PIDGIN SPEAKERS OR WRITERS TO KNOW?

Lotta times people try position Pidgin against English. But just cuz you learn one language, no mean you gotta give up your oddah ones. Just remembah, da mo languages you know, da mo’powah to you!

“This non-judgmental, supportive space will have such a positive impact on our veteran community on this campus.”

► ON MAUI AND HAWAI'I ISLAND, VETERANS ARE GAINING EXPANDED ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND CAMPUS-BASED SUPPORT THROUGH NEW INITIATIVES.

In October, UH Hilo opened a Veteran Student Services Resource Center to support student veterans and their families from both UH Hilo and Hawai'i Community College.

The center serves as a central hub for benefits assistance and community resources, offering a welcoming space designed to improve access to services.

UH Maui College is planning a new Veterans Affairs clinic to help meet the growing demand for services among Maui's veterans and provide hands-on learning opportunities for students. The facility will expand access to primary care, women's health, mental health, cardiology and other specialty care services on the island, improving timely care for veterans and reducing the need to travel elsewhere.

[“UH Hilo Vet Center Now Open,” UH Hilo News, 10/9/25]

\$1.4 MILLION

UH Hilo was awarded more than \$1.4 million to take part in a \$152 million artificial intelligence joint project sponsored by the National Science Foundation and NVIDIA, led by the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence. The project aims to build fully open AI systems to accelerate scientific discovery, and UH Hilo faculty and students will gain hands-on experience with advanced AI tools.



BREAKING GROUND

In Central O'ahu, the Wahiawā Center for Workforce Excellence, a \$42.5 million, 43,000-square-foot facility, will house UH Community College satellite classrooms, along with a new Wahiawā Public Library and Hawai'i

Department of Education district offices. The three-story structure will also include computer labs and a sensory lab for use by the UH Community Colleges.

NEWLY ESTABLISHED

UH was selected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to be a new Pacific Reef Research Coordination Institute, housed at UH's Office of Land and Ocean Conservation Futures. The institute will support coral reef conservation through research, public education and partnerships across Hawai'i and the Pacific. Researchers from UH Mānoa's Kewalo Marine Laboratory, Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, UH Hilo's Marine Science program and the University of Guam's Marine Laboratory will help guide the institute's work.



“This facility represents a new chapter for Honolulu Community College while preparing our students to be a part of Hawai'i's future economy.”

— KAREN C. LEE, CHANCELLOR OF HONOLULU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

► IN AUGUST, HONOLULU COMMUNITY COLLEGE OPENED HAWAI'I'S FIRST ADVANCED MANUFACTURING PROGRAM FACILITY, a state-of-the-art training center where students learn technical skills in modern manufacturing technologies. The program prepares students for careers in maritime manufacturing and other fields aligned with growing Hawai'i's defense and industrial sectors. It was developed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense's Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment Program, the Ku'i Hao initiative and BG Workforce.

[“Hawai'i's 1st advanced manufacturing training program launches at Honolulu CC,” UH News, 8/7/25]

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HARPERCOLLINS



What the Stone Holds

by CHRISTINE HITT

ALUMNA
JASMIN 'IOLANI
HAKES BLENDS
HISTORICAL
FICTION WITH
MAGICAL REALISM
IN HER NEW NOVEL

A STORY THAT SPANS LAND, LINEAGE AND BELONGING anchors “The Pōhaku,” the latest novel from Hilo-born author Jasmin ‘Iolani Hakes (AS ’02, Hawai‘i CC).

Blending historical fiction with magical realism, “The Pōhaku” traces more than 300 years of connection between Hawai‘i and California and is centered on a powerful stone. “It became a climate story couched within this tale of this grandma trying to heal her granddaughter by telling her the story of their family and who they are,” Hakes says.

“What it was ultimately inspired by

was when I moved to Sacramento,” she continues. “I went on a field trip to Sutter’s Fort, and I learned there was a very brief mention of ‘Sutter kanakas,’ and my ears perked up. I wanted to know more about who these people were.” Hakes spent years researching the Hawaiians who left for California with John Sutter and adds, “‘The Pōhaku’ is really a reimagining of an oral history of one of those descendants.”

For Hakes, now based in Manhattan Beach, California, the novel follows the success of her debut, “Hula,” a contemporary story set in Hilo that also examines identity and place.

Hakes followed a nonlinear path to writing. She studied early childhood education at Hawai‘i Community College and studied political science at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo before building a career in political fundraising and non-profit development. Throughout, writing

remained a constant, eventually becoming her full-time work.

Now, Hakes continues to return to Hawai‘i and is currently working on a memoir as well as another novel that is not historical or about Hawai‘i. “It’s completely unhinged in a fun way, and I’m having fun just writing,” she says.



MORE TO READ



“**Ohana Style,**” by Sheldon Simeon (CC ’00, Leeward CC; AA ’03, UH Maui) Simeon, a two-time “Top Chef” fan favorite, features recipes for everyday meals with diverse flavors in his second cookbook.

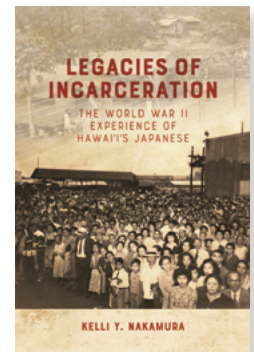
“**The Courageous Forrest Brothers,**” by Sami Ke (BS ’05, UH Mānoa)

Written under a pen name, Fion Lau’s children’s book series explores emotions, drawing on her experiences as a sibling and mother of two sons.



“**Legacies of Incarceration: The World War II Experience of Hawai‘i’s Japanese,**” by (BA ’00, MA ’03, UH Mānoa)

The book examines incarceration experiences across all Islands through oral histories, interviews, songs and diaries.



AT THE FOREFRONT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IS INTEGRATING AI ACROSS ITS CAMPUSES, IN TEACHING, RESEARCH AND OPERATIONS, WHILE BUILDING FRAMEWORKS TO GUIDE ITS ETHICAL USE

by LIBBY LEONARD

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS WEAVING ITS WAY THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM, reshaping how scientists and students work, how research is conducted and how the university is adapting to the changing technological landscape.

For more than two decades, UH Hilo biology professor Patrick Hart has monitored Hawai'i's endangered forest birds through their songs and calls during the Islands' ongoing extinction crisis.

The work was once extremely difficult. Many species live in remote forest areas that are hard to access. Hart and other highly trained biologists who can recognize every vocalization from various species and estimate their distances would hike to these locations and conduct eight-minute counts in each area. According to Hart, the method had a wide margin for error since rare birds might not vocalize at all or be hard to detect. He says he always thought there could be a better way.

In 2014, he founded UH's bioacoustics lab, now known as the LOHE Lab (Listening Observatory for Hawaiian Ecosystems), and began placing recording devices across the forest to capture hours of sound at a time. But analyzing all of that data was labor-intensive and time-consuming.

A major shift came two years ago, when the lab partnered with Google and its Perch

AI algorithm to identify Hawaiian bird songs, giving Hart's team the ability to process massive soundscape data quickly.

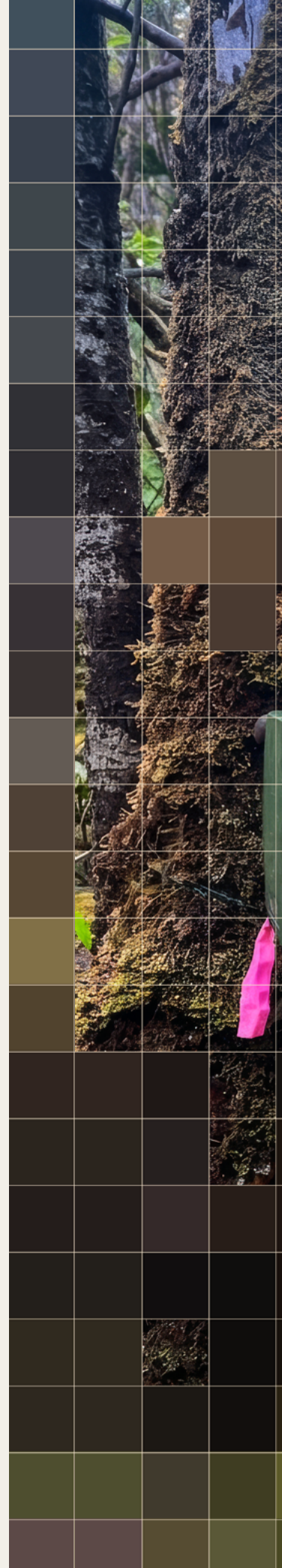
Since then, hundreds of recording devices have been deployed across the subalpine slopes of Maunakea and throughout Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on Hawai'i Island, allowing Hart and his students to monitor bird populations in near real time.

"It's become really useful as a new tool to monitor our bird populations," Hart says. He describes it as an early warning system for population declines, helping refuge managers respond more quickly to threats such as habitat loss, disease or predation.

Hart's program is one of several across the UH system demonstrating how AI is being creatively applied in research, learning and institutional initiatives.

"AI is transforming every profession, and universities that are not helping lead at this moment risk becoming less relevant to the students and communities they serve," says University of Hawai'i President Wendy Hensel.

"At the University of Hawai'i, we are using AI to strengthen teaching and research and to work more efficiently as an institution, while preparing our students not only to succeed in an AI-enabled world, but to help shape what comes next in ways that reflect our values of responsibility, stewardship and service to Hawai'i," she says.





A researcher interacts with a remote acoustic sensor in the Hakalau Forest. By pairing hundreds of these field devices with Google's Perch AI algorithm, the University of Hawai'i's LOHE Lab is transforming millions of hours of raw forest soundscapes into a real-time early warning system for endangered native birds.



SYSTEM-WIDE INTEGRATION

Building on this vision, UH is applying AI across disciplines, from Hart’s work monitoring native birds to partnerships with the National Science Foundation on sensors that provide faster natural disaster warnings, to medical research at the UH Cancer Center and efforts at the Hawai’i Institute for Astronomy to accelerate research and deepen understandings of space.

In recent years, the university has expanded AI literacy by making tools, discussion forums and classes available to students and faculty. One central platform recently launched is UH OneAI Hub, which includes peer collaboration resources, advanced teaching and learning badges, courses on AI use and guidance on integrating AI into teaching, research and professional practice.

This fall, UH Mānoa also launched two graduate programs in AI and data science to better equip students for high-demand technology careers in an ever-evolving field.

One certificate program allows students without a computer science background to participate.

“We have a diverse group of students with a background in economics,

geography, ecology, physics and others. They chose the programs to augment their existing expertise with AI, and that’s exactly what’s happening. What they’re learning is making them more capable in their own disciplines. A few are already thinking about continuing on to the full master’s program to go even deeper,” says Mahdi Belcaid, an associate professor in the Department of Information and Computer Sciences at UH Mānoa, who teaches three courses in the program.

“GenAI is directly integrated into all my courses, and students are actively engaged with GenAI tools in all aspects of their learning,” says Debasis Bhattacharya, professor and program coordinator for the Applied Business and Information Technology program at UH Maui College, where he teaches technology entrepreneurship. GenAI, or generative AI, allows machines to create new content, such as text, images, music, videos and code based on prompts.

“The quality and efficiency of student work have dramatically improved since the introduction of GenAI,” Bhattacharya says. He is also a member of the university’s new AI Curriculum and Pedagogy Task Force, which is one of several advisory groups focused on developing and recommending a framework for its use at the 10 campuses.

GROUNDED IN CULTURE

Across the UH system, the different advisory groups address areas including curriculum and pedagogy, ethics and governance, operations, workforce development and Hawaiian values and culture.

Gloria Niles, who was named UH’s chief academic technology innovation officer in March, says grounding AI integration in Native Hawaiian values means ensuring that culture is a fundamental strategy.

“As an Indigenous-serving, Native Hawaiian-focused institution, the University of Hawai’i has a kuleana (responsibility) to ensure that the use of AI is always conducted ethically, transparently and responsibly,” she says.

She is working with the Hawaiian Values and Culture Task Force and the AI Planning Group to develop a comprehensive AI values framework grounded in Native Hawaiian principles. She says these values are expressed through Indigenous data sovereignty, aloha, which includes ethical stewardship, and mālama ‘āina, which honors the relationship with land and resources.

“This requires incorporating environmental sustainability into the AI strategy, ensuring that technological goals prioritize stewardship of the Islands’ resources,” she explains.

“UH is positioned to lead in AI not just technologically, but ethically and culturally, creating a model that sets it apart from institutions on the continent and establishes the university as a Pacific leader in culturally rooted, ethical AI.”

A Heart for Kūpuna

JABSOM STUDENT KRISTAL XIE HAS A PASSION FOR HELPING HAWAII'S ELDERLY

by LANCE TOMINAGA

FOR MANY PEOPLE, A TRAUMATIC EVENT CAN CREATE INDELIBLE SCARS. For Kristal Xie, a near-tragedy as a young teenager inspired her to serve a rapidly growing segment of our society.

Xie, 26, is a second-year student at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). In January, the Hawai'i Pacific Gerontological Society presented her with the Nā Lima Kōkua Award, which recognizes students "demonstrating exceptional dedication to gerontology."

"One in four people in Hawai'i will be aged 65 or older by 2035," Xie says. "We need long-term support for our kūpuna. They raised us, and they deserve the best quality of life possible."

Xie was 13 when her mother was rushed to the emergency room. Doctors discovered a ruptured tumor, and

she was taken into surgery immediately.

"If she hadn't gone to the hospital, she would have died," recalls Xie, an 'Iolani School graduate. "My entire world turned upside-down that day. But the healthcare team was so great to me and my family. They were the light that we needed during that difficult time. Experiencing that, I knew I wanted to be that [light] for other people."

Inspired to action, Xie spent the next four years as a volunteer at Kuakini Medical Center.

"I'd go every Sunday," she says. "I wanted to offer solace, hope and compassion to older adults. I enjoyed talking to the residents and learning about their healthcare challenges."

Xie returned to Kuakini during her first year at JABSOM. She was selected to take part in the school's Wellness Initiative for Seniors in Hawai'i, a

program that connects students with kūpuna through weekly visits.

"This time, with the medical knowledge I picked up at JABSOM, I was able to see the challenges of aging in a different light," she explains. "Also, we got to do research projects and present our findings to raise awareness in the community. We talked about the impact of social isolation and the importance of maintaining involvement with their loved ones. For us, a two minute-conversation might not seem like much. But for that resident, it might make their whole week."

She continues, "For me, the most rewarding thing is seeing them smile and living their best life. I hope to inspire younger people to step up and care for their kūpuna. Everyone can make a difference."

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KRISTAL XIE



ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES, RECOMMENDED BY XIE

MINI-MED SCHOOL

The Dr. Rosita Leong Mini-Medical School shares accessible, medical school-level information on healthy aging for the general public.

minimed.jabsom.hawaii.edu

A.L.O.H.A. WALKS

JABSOM's monthly Walks for A.L.O.H.A. (Attaining Lasting Optimal Health for All) promotes physical activity and community connection while offering health tips and snacks.

[instagram.com/jabsom_walks_for_aloha](https://www.instagram.com/jabsom_walks_for_aloha)

UH CANCER CENTER EVENTS

The UH Cancer Center hosts community programs that connect kūpuna with experts while sharing research and prevention information.

uhcancercenter.org

HPGS SYMPOSIUMS

The Hawai'i Pacific Gerontological Society hosts symposiums and events highlighting current research and advancements in aging.

hpgs.org



A TIME CAPSULE IN PHOTOS

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE ARCHIVES UNCOVERS IMAGES DOCUMENTING THE UNIVERSITY'S EARLY YEARS

by CHRISTINE HITT





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1. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses 10,000 people at a civil rights rally at Andrews Outdoor Theatre in 1964.

2. Two people examine a vehicle during a class at Honolulu Community College in 1966.

3. Hawai'i Hall, the university's first building, 1948.

4. Students come and go from the Gregg M. Sinclair Library in 1966.

5. An engineering student poses for a portrait at Mānoa campus, no date.

6. Entomology staff members pose for a group photo in 1968.

7. A botany class in the 1920s. More than a century later, botany remains part of UH's academic offerings.

8. Students, including Patsy Mink, participate in a model constitutional convention to draft a state constitution in 1948.

9. Performers take part in a dance presentation with the Music Department, no date.

10. An aerial view of the campus in 1933 shows Hawai'i Hall, Gartley Hall and the library, now known as George Hall, among its early buildings.

11. Built in 1925, George Hall is known for its neoclassical arches, 1967.



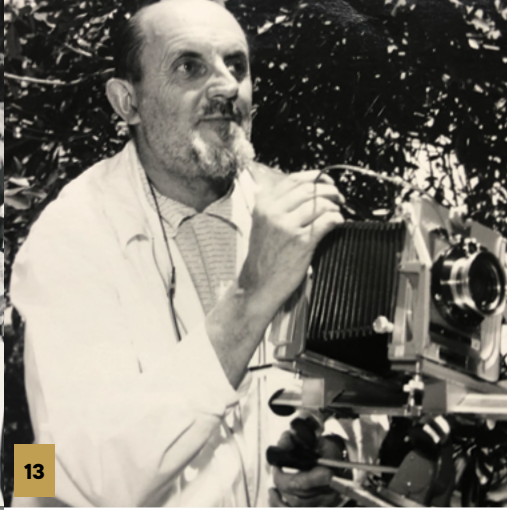
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12. A May Day court poses in 1952.

15. Students sit in front of the UH Hilo Branch sign in 1951.

13. Photographer Ansel Adams takes photos on the Mānoa campus, no date.

16. An anti-Vietnam War rally in 1966.

14. A packed stadium watches a game between the University of Hawai'i and Navy football teams, circa 1930.

17. Jean Charlot teaches a fresco class, circa 1949, beside his work, "Woman Lifting Rebozo."



16

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HAWAII STATE ARCHIVES; UH HILO; MIYAMOTO PHOTO COLLECTION AND OURD; U OF HAWAII ARCHIVES



17

Palaka's Rising Popularity

THE ICONIC CHECKERBOARD FABRIC IS TRENDING AGAIN IN LOCAL FASHION

by CHRISTINE HITT



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MATT BRUENING

PALAKA, THE PLAID COTTON FABRIC THAT GAINED PROMINENCE DURING THE PLANTATION ERA, is experiencing a resurgence in Hawai'i fashion, and for local designer Matt Bruening (BS '09, UH Mānoa), that renewed visibility feels both exciting and familiar.

"I just love that we all get to celebrate an adapted textile that has been woven through the times in Hawai'i history," he says. "I think there's a shift into honoring things that are deeply rooted here, and palaka being brought to the masses is kind of beautiful to see and awesome to see how brands are interpreting it in their aesthetics."

Bruening says his brand's best-selling items have been his bucket hats, pants and shorts. "Our color blocking of the palaka

print has been a signature of the brand as well, and that was fun to play with pants, shorts and easy day dresses in short and maxi silhouettes," he says.

He first began working with palaka as a way to reconnect with the past. "It was just a nostalgic way to bring it back in a way I saw it," he says, calling it "an iconic fabric that brings up all kinds of memories."

As palaka's popularity has grown, so has his approach. He's evolved his use of it to include "offering it in more contemporary styles that reflect the times of today" while "honoring the legacy and journey of where the history of the fabric has brought us here in the current climate of where fashion is now, specifically here in Hawai'i."

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BLUE SUN PICTURES



"Paper Bag Plan" writer-director Anthony Lucero, producer Ke'alohi Lee Lucero, and actors Lance Kinsey and Cole Massie.

Heartfelt Film Goes Global

by CHRISTINE HITT

WHAT BEGAN AS A SMALL independent production has grown into an internationally recognized film that honors caregivers. "Paper Bag Plan," produced by Ke'alohi Lee Lucero (BA '97, MA '99, UH Mānoa) is now streaming worldwide on multiple platforms, including Apple TV and Prime Video, after earning awards at 17 film festivals, including Best Feature and Best Actor at the Santa Monica Film Festival.

Written and directed by Lucero's husband, Anthony Lucero, the fictional drama follows a father with terminal illness teaching his disabled son independence through work as a grocery bagger. The film stars Lance Kinsey, best known for his role as Lt. Proctor in "Police Academy," as the father, and Cole Massie as the son.

"I didn't go into the festivals thinking we were going to win," Ke'alohi Lee Lucero says. "We were just grateful that the programmers wanted to showcase our movie."

After graduating from high school, Lucero says she didn't initially aspire to work in film and television, but during her first week at UH Mānoa, she was hired at PBS Hawai'i and walked into the studio, realizing, "This is what I should be doing." She went on to become the youngest live director. "I just ended up spending every waking moment I could there and learned as much as I could," she says.

Lucero later worked on shows including "Baywatch Hawai'i," before moving to Los Angeles in 2003. "One of the shows that I helped

INDEPENDENT FILM WINS AWARDS AND IS NOW AVAILABLE ON STREAMING PLATFORMS

PHOTO: KEN YATOMI, COURTESY OF BISHOP MUSEUM

MORE THAN A GAME

In February, the first statewide kōnane tournament in modern history took place at the Bishop Museum, in partnership with Pā Kōnane, Ka Hale Hoaka, Ka'ūpūlehu Cultural Center, Akau Boards and HawaiianCheckers.com, which is owned by alum Uncle John Ka'ohelauli'i (AMTC '80, Windward CC).

"I hate to say this, but today, most Hawaiians don't know how to play kōnane. My focus was on the educational side of this tournament," says John Ka'ohelauli'i, who started HawaiianCheckers.com in 2011 to share cultural knowledge.

Ka'ohelauli'i learned to play when he was 8 years old as a Cub Scout. Then his father made him a papamū (checkerboard) out of koa wood, and he has been playing ever since. He started teaching others when he was a tour bus driver on Kaua'i and came to see it as more than a game.

"My biggest challenge with kōnane has been elevating it from a child's game to an ancient Hawaiian training tool for the greatest leaders in Hawaiian history," he says.

In the months leading up to the Bishop Museum event, qualifying matches were held across the Islands, and the final competitors

start was ‘America’s Got Talent,’ and I’m still on it. It’s been 21 years for me.”

She looks back on her time at UH with appreciation. “I learned how to learn by going to UH, and I think that was probably the most valuable lesson I’ve taken with me in my career, especially as a producer. You have to kind of learn along the way and learn how to figure things out,” she says.

On “Paper Bag Plan,” Lucero served as the showrunner and producer, with oversight across all departments from development through completion.

“I want people to know that the film is coming from a real place because my husband, he grew up alongside his brother, who is disabled. His mom was a single mom by that time,” Lucero says. “My husband’s father got killed when he was a young boy and so he watched his mom and all the love and dedication and struggles that she had raising a disabled child along with seven other kids and no other help.”

“And I want people to understand that it’s from a place of dedication to his mom and love for his parents and caregivers of children with disabilities,” she adds.

Looking ahead, Lucero and her husband are developing future projects, including a sequel to the 2014 film “East Side Sushi” and others they hope to shoot in Hawai‘i.

advanced to the single-elimination tournament. Ka’ohelaui‘i provided play-by-play commentary to help spectators follow the game and understand each move in real time. “We kept the viewer engaged as we reached the final move of the night,” he says.

“Kōnane is easy to learn. But in its simplicity, it is a very complex game,” he says, referencing his book, “Black Book of Kōnane.” “Like in life, you can only make one move at a time. Take your time, then make your move.” — CH



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHRISTINE LAMBORN AND KENNEDY THEATRE

TELLING LAHAINA’S STORY THROUGH HANA KEAKA

FROM MAUI, IKAIIKA MENDEZ (BA ’23, MA ’26, UH Mānoa) left for O’ahu to begin UH Mānoa’s three-year MFA Hawaiian theater program just before the Lahaina fires. By the end of the program, the weight of what happened in Lahaina had become the play “Lele Wale,” a sold-out thesis production exploring grief, resilience and cultural memory through hana keaka.

The play debuted in March at the Earle Earnst Lab Theatre and is set to go on tour this summer. Its title, “Lele Wale,” draws from Lahaina’s ancient name, Lele. Mendez then looked at different meanings of lele and chose the phrase “lele wale,” which means to move freely or on your own accord. It is also used in the closing of prayers.

“Once I was locked into that title, then I was like, oh, I know this is going to be a ceremony. This show is not just a performance anymore, it’s a prayer,” says Mendez, the writer and director. “It’s letting go. It’s releasing emotions. It’s releasing trauma, grief, all of those things. I knew from that moment that’s the space I need to create with this show.”

The play follows five Lahaina characters — a firefighter, lawyer, single mother, entertainer and

Lahainaluna student — as they navigate life before, during and after the disaster. Told through ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, English, Pidgin, chant, hula and music, the production blends contemporary storytelling with traditional Hawaiian performance.

The depiction of the fire used light projections and a smoke machine, with audiences given an advisory beforehand. “We weren’t sitting in it too long. ... We got to watch the fire happen and then automatically, the cast comes out and then they’re acting already,” Mendez says, adding that the moment flows into “a song that we get to cry to and we get to be in that emotion.”

Mendez, who grew up performing in Lahaina’s entertainment community, says he initially questioned whether he should tell the story because he was not from Lahaina itself. But conversations with survivors pushed him forward.

“I got the same response from everybody that I talked to,” he says. “‘If it’s not you, then who is it?’”

The play ends on a forward-looking note, as the characters consider life beyond the fire. In the final moment, they perform one last chant. Mendez says it’s “a prayer to free the space,” before ending together in a collective shout of “lele wale.” — CH

Dream Fulfilled

ANTHONY CARTER'S TIME AS A RAINBOW LED TO HIS VERY OWN POT OF GOLD

by LANCE TOMINAGA



“I HAVE A DREAM TO SOMEDAY BECOME A PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYER.”

Anthony Carter (ND '98, UH Mānoa) was in the fifth grade when he wrote those words. Today, 40 years later, the man Hawai'i basketball fans affectionately call “AC” can say he fulfilled that dream — and then some.

Carter, who played for the University of Hawai'i from 1996 to 1998, had his No. 23 jersey retired during halftime of the UH–University of California, Santa Barbara game in February. It was the culmination of a storied hoops career that included nearly 20 seasons as an NBA player and coach.

“To have my number retired, that’s something I never expected to happen,” says Carter, 51. “It was overwhelming. People came up to me and shared their memories of my playing days here. I was shown so much love, and that meant a lot to me.”

Carter’s basketball journey has been well documented: Raised in Atlanta by his grandmother, young Anthony dropped out of school after the ninth grade and spent the next three years hustling money playing pickup games. One day, an oppos-

ing player recommended Carter to Bill Brummell, the head coach at Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, California.

To help him get on track for college, he connected with the Atlanta-based I Have a Dream Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports young people from under-resourced communities. The foundation had adopted Carter’s fifth grade class, promising each student college tuition if they stayed in school and maintained a C average. With the organization’s help, Carter attained his GED. The foundation also paid for his flight to California.

Carter thrived at Saddleback and received a scholarship offer from Hawai'i. During his two seasons at Mānoa, the 6-foot-1, 190-pound point guard averaged 18.4 points and a school record 6.9 assists, earning honorable mention All-America honors twice. Moreover, he led the program to two postseason appearances and its first-ever Western Athletic Conference regular season title.

Carter also played a starring role in arguably the biggest win in the history of Rainbow Warrior basketball — a 76–65 upset over No. 2 Kansas in the championship game of the 1997 Rainbow Classic. He was named MVP after recording 19

points, five rebounds and seven assists in the title contest.

“I didn’t want to lose that game because I knew [winning] was going to help put Hawai'i on the map.”

He was right. The following week, UH received its first national ranking (No. 20) in nearly 25 years.

Carter went on to play in the NBA for 13 seasons. During his career, he was a teammate of nine future Hall of Fame players, including Tim Duncan, Allen Iverson, Kevin Garnett, Carmelo Anthony and Alonzo Mourning. He also played for Hall of Fame head coaches Pat Riley, Gregg Popovich and George Karl.

After retiring as a player, Carter served as an assistant coach for several NBA teams, most recently with the Memphis Grizzlies. On Jan. 3, 2025, from the visiting team’s bench, he witnessed the professional debut of his son, Devin, a first-round draft pick of the Sacramento Kings.

“I got chills,” Carter recalls. “I was so happy for him. The Sacramento fans all stood and cheered when he entered the game. I wanted to stand and cheer, too!”

Carter knows his road to success isn’t the norm, and that makes him appreciate



it even more.

“Everybody has a different route to take, and mine wasn’t the smoothest,” he admits. “But God had a plan for me. I didn’t want to follow the path that my uncles and cousins were on. They were selling drugs and going in and out of prison. So when I got a second chance, I took it.”

He smiles. “My grandmother was my biggest supporter. She always prayed for me. I told her, ‘Once I make it, you’ll never have to work another day in your life.’ And basically that’s what happened.”

Along the way, Carter has found ways to give back. He served as the national spokesperson for the I Have a Dream Foundation. In 2008, he established an endowment fund to support UH men’s basketball scholarships.

“I’ll always love Hawai‘i and UH,” he says. “Once a Rainbow, always a Rainbow.”

FIVE NEWCOMERS TO WATCH

Every new sports season brings an influx of promising newcomers to UH Mānoa’s athletics ‘ohana. Here are five to keep your eyes on.

AUDRIC HARRIS

Football

(Junior Wide Receiver)

Former Bishop Gorman High School standout reunites with QB Micah Alejado to bolster Hawai‘i’s passing attack.

MAËLI CORMIER

Women’s Volleyball

(Sophomore Outside Hitter)

This Oregon State transfer will add punch to the Rainbow Wahine offense. She had 266 kills for the Beavers in 2025.

ANUHEA ALULI

Women’s Soccer

(Senior Forward)

The 2022 Hawai‘i Gatorade Player of the Year returns home after playing the past four seasons at Oakland University.

MARCUS ADAMS JR.

Men’s Basketball

(RS Junior Forward)

This 6-foot-8 marksman should make an immediate impact on the team’s rebuilt roster.

PAYTON MILLS

Women’s Basketball

(Freshman Forward)

She led Lynden High School to three straight Washington 2A state championships. — *LT*

A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME

FOR UH ATHLETICS, MANAGING NIL IS A MATTER OF DOLLARS AND SENSE

The debate on whether college athletes should be paid for their services has come and gone. Name, image and likeness (NIL) compensation is here.

“This is the state of the new landscape of college athletics,” says Hunter Niswander, University of Hawai‘i Athletics Director of Development and NIL. “These student-athletes bring a lot of value to these institutions. Most universities view their athletic departments as the front porch of their institution. We’re giving these athletes opportunities that are potentially life-changing.

Name, image and likeness allows college athletes to control and profit from their identity. A historic federal court settlement in June 2025 allows schools to directly pay their student-athletes up to a combined \$20.5 million annually.

There are two types of NIL: institutional NIL, in which universities directly pay athletes, and non-institutional NIL, which permits private individuals and entities to compensate athletes in exchange for their services, such as endorsements and appearances.

Schools in the Power Four conferences, including USC, Ohio State, Michigan and Alabama, have no problem reaching the \$20.5-million cap, with additional non-institutional deals adding millions more.

For Hawai‘i and other mid-major programs, however, raising NIL funds to recruit and retain their athletes is a challenge. Starting in August, the majority of UH teams will be competing in the Mountain West Conference, while others will compete in the Big West Conference.

Niswander said Hawai‘i isn’t concerned with keeping up with the Power Four schools. “We’re not worried about competing with the schools who are right at the cap. We’re in a different ballpark,” he says. “We’re focused on being the best at where we’re at — and then go from there.”

UH’s NIL budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year was approximately \$3 million. UH Athletics is targeting a \$5 million NIL chest for 2026-27. Past funding efforts have included golf tournaments and auctions for game-worn jerseys. The school has also set up a Boost the ‘Bows Fund, which allows donations to the overall fund or to specific teams.

Niswander points out that the primary mission of UH Athletics remains the same.

“First and foremost, it’s about receiving a world-class education,” he says. “That’s priority number one. Also, we have incredible coaches who have built winning cultures that resonate with student-athletes. We have an incredibly supportive community. And we are able to offer experiences that you can only find in Hawai‘i. We provide them with the full experience.” — *LT*

The Grind

FORMER UH TENNIS ALL-AMERICAN ANDRE ILAGAN (BBA '22, UH MĀNOA) IS PUTTING IN THE WORK TO CLIMB THE WORLD RANKINGS

by **LANCE TOMINAGA**



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDRE ILAGAN

IN PROFESSIONAL TENNIS, THERE IS no express elevator to the top. The ascent requires a grueling climb that tests patience, physical limits and mental toughness.

Just ask former University of Hawai'i All-American Andre Ilagan.

Ilagan, who earned a bachelor's degree in finance at the Shidler College of Business, is in his third full year as a professional tennis player. Thus far, he has captured three singles titles and a pair of doubles championships.

We caught up with Ilagan while he was in between tournaments in Maanshan, China.

HOW'S LIFE AS A TOURING PROFESSIONAL?

Overall, it's been great. Not many people in this world get to play their favorite sport as a job, so I'm very grateful for that.

YOU'VE BEEN COMPETING ALL OVER THE GLOBE. WHERE'S YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO PLAY?

I love being in the Asia region, where everything's cheaper. Plus, I love Asian food. Of course, I hope there will be a tournament in Hawai'i one day. Then, that will definitely be my favorite destination.

ALL THAT TRAVELING MUST BE TOUGH. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH IT?

Keeping it real? It is tough. It's a grind. You have 15-hour flights and layovers,

you're jet-lagged, and your sleep schedule gets thrown off.

But I've gotten used to it. When I land, if it's still during the daytime I try to get to the facility and hit balls for a half hour or so, just to get more tired. That way, it's easier for me to fall asleep at night.

DO YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR YOUR OWN EXPENSES?

Yes. I pay for my own flights, transportation, accommodations and food. That's one reason I prefer longer trips — to get my money's worth. In professional tennis, you have to figure out how much you need to make in order to keep playing. You're basically betting on yourself.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ANTHONY AKAU WITH HAWAII HILO ATHLETICS

HILO STANDOUTS

Sophomores Malu Garcia and Isabella Freeman were key to a strong season for UH Hilo's women's volleyball team, earning top honors both within their conference and across the western region of collegiate competition.

Both Vulcans were selected to the All-PacWest First Team, recognizing them as among the best in their

league. Garcia was also named the PacWest Conference newcomer of the year and earned American Volleyball Coaches Association All-America honorable mention after finishing the season as one of the region's leading scorers — recording 375 kills and averaging 4.22 points per set. Garcia was also named as the 2025-26 Hawai'i Hilo Female Athlete of the Year.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET TO COME BACK TO HAWAII'?

I try to come home at least 10 weeks out of the year. It gives me a chance to relax and check myself out mentally.

WHAT GOALS HAVE YOU SET FOR YOURSELF?

I just want to improve my game every year. I want to mature as a person both on and off the court. Eventually, I want to get ranked in the top 230; that will get me in the Grand Slam events.

HOW DID YOUR TIME AS A UH STUDENT-ATHLETE HELP PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW?

I learned how to manage my time and be accountable. I used to do the bare minimum in the classroom, doing just enough to get a 3.1 GPA. I remember my team captains telling me, "What are you doing? You think you just want to pass and play tennis? No. You need to put in the same effort on and off the court." The next semester, I got a 3.9. My time at UH really pushed me to do my best in everything I do, and that really stuck with me.

Freeman anchored the defense, leading the NCAA West Region in blocks and ranking among the top 10 in NCAA Division II with 144 total blocks, while also securing D2 CCA All-West Region First Team recognition.

—Christine Hitt

TRANSFORMING LIVES

A WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAM IS HELPING INCARCERATED STUDENTS BUILD NEW PATHS FORWARD

by **LIBBY LEONARD**

IN MARCH, HAUNANI REED, DIRECTOR of a Windward Community College program serving incarcerated individuals, traveled from O'ahu to Kūlani Correctional Facility on Hawai'i Island, located on the slopes of Mauna Loa. While she admired the beautiful scenery, Reed says it was the people inside the facility who left the strongest impression.

"It was inspiring to see how eager these future students are to begin our courses," she says.

Founded in 2017 by Chancellor Ardis Eschenberg, the Pu'uhonua: Places of Sanctuary program was created to serve Native Hawaiians, who are overrepresented in the prison system. It offers college-level courses and trauma-informed support grounded in Native Hawaiian values such as refuge, healing and kuleana (responsibility). Its goal is to help students reconnect with their culture, succeed academically and break cycles of incarceration.

Due to its success, the program transitioned from a grant-funded project to a federally approved Prison Education Program in 2025, securing steady funding from the Department of Education. It initially served students at the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility and the Women's Community Correctional Center, and later expanded to Hālawā Correctional Facility and the Saguaro Correctional Center in Arizona, which houses Hawai'i's incarcerated population out of state.

"While many people only see the mistakes of those in the justice system, I see individuals who are deeply capable and hungry for growth," Reed says.

Kūlani is the Pu'uhonua program's most recent site. Reed says the partnership is a key part of ongoing work with the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to expand academic pathways and ensure that incarcerated individuals across Hawai'i have access to the quality education and cultural connection they deserve.

The program currently offers an associate degree in liberal arts at the Women's Community Correctional Center, with courses in psychology, sociology and community health. It also offers an associate degree in Hawaiian Studies at Hālawā Correctional Facility and Saguaro Correctional Center, including courses in Hawaiian language, history, hula and ethnobotany.

In addition, students can participate in hands-on programming in sustainable agriculture and agripharmatech, where students can earn certificates of achievement in courses that combine STEM-integrated plant biotechnology with traditional Hawaiian knowledge, such as kalo cultivation and traditional plant medicines.

"The results often surpass expectations," Reed says, adding that many students maintain GPAs of 3.6 or higher. "Seeing them transform from pa'ahao (prisoners) into scholarly leaders and mentors proves that when you provide a pu'uhonua, a place of sanctuary and education, you don't just change an individual, you change the future of their children and the health of their entire community."



UH Community College and Department of Correction and Rehabilitation staff, from left to right: Roseanne Propato, Frank Young, William Cook, Sanna Munoz, Pu'uhonua Director Haunani Reed, Windward CC Chancellor Ardis Eschenberg, Susan Kazama, Kenneth Rowe and Rex Ribao.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF HAUNANI REED

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TIM LEE



RECOGNIZED

FIVE-STAR HOTELIER

ALUMNUS TIM LEE (AA '80, KAPI'OLANI CC) HAS EARNED HIS PLACE AT THE TOP OF THE HOSPITALITY WORLD

TIM LEE REMEMBERS HIS INTRODUCTION TO THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY. Resolute and enterprising, he walked from one end of Waikiki to the other, applying for a job at every hotel along the way. “Nobody would hire me,” he says, laughing. “Everywhere I went, the response was the same: ‘Go take some hotel courses, then come back.’”

Today, some four decades later, Lee is one of the world’s most accomplished hoteliers. He has traveled across the globe — from Paris to Taipei, New York to Beverly Hills — turning struggling hotels into five-star properties. He has forged friendships with the likes of Nancy Reagan, Elizabeth Taylor, Julia Roberts and Robert Redford. The current property he manages — the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur, California — is recognized as one of the “greatest luxury hotels on Earth.”

Not bad for a self-described “surfer boy.”

Born and raised in Honolulu, Lee started taking classes at Kapi’olani Community College while he was still a senior at McKinley High School. Originally intending to go into occupational therapy, he sought a hotel job to help pay for his education.

Eventually, he landed a housekeeping position at Inn on the Park, a small hotel (now a condominium) located across from Fort DeRussy.

“I thought I would be good at [housekeeping],” Lee recalls. “Little did I know that it would be the hardest job of my life. I was cleaning 23 rooms a day!”

Lee also served stints as a bellman and dishwasher. To this day, he advises aspiring hotel managers to start from the bottom.

“When you start with entry-level jobs and work your way up, the employees will respect you more,” he says. “There are some who take [managerial] positions straight out of school, and most of them fail. They can be book smart, but they never had to carry luggage or clean a bathtub. Nothing beats basic training and experience. Those things are invaluable.”

He also credits his success to his time at Kapi’olani CC, where he earned an associate degree in hotel management.

“When you’re working, everyone is too busy doing their jobs to explain everything to you, so I would take my questions to my instructors,” says Lee. “They were so patient and caring. They always took the time to explain things to me.”

From Inn on the Park, Lee landed a position at the Hyatt Regency Waikiki and worked his way up the corporate ladder,



Tim Lee with Nancy Reagan during his time as general manager at The Hotel Bel Air in Los Angeles; and with President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama at the Kahala Hotel & Resort’s ballroom.

eventually taking his talents to the Hyatt Embarcadero in San Francisco. Years later, on the advice of his boss, noted hotelier Robert Burns, Lee started his own consulting company and helped oversee renovations, grand openings and expansions of grand hotels around the world.

Lee joined Post Ranch Inn in the spring of 2021. Under his leadership, the picturesque cliffside resort has won numerous major awards, including being named the No. 1 Top Hideaway in the U.S. by the Andrew Harper Members Choice Awards and Best Eco-Friendly Hotel by USA Today. In 2024, the resort became one of only 11 hotels in the U.S. to receive the inaugural Michelin Guide Three-Key distinction, which signifies the very highest level of luxury and service.

Whether he's in Big Sur or London, Lee says there is one familiar ingredient to his successes.

"I bring my aloha spirit wherever I go," he says. "It's always a part of the equation. In Hawai'i, we go out of our way to make our guests feel at home and feel special. And we do it from the heart."

And his next step?

"I want to permanently return home," he says. "I want to give back to Hawai'i and work with a property that truly values and takes care of their staff. If you take care of the staff, they will take care of your P&L [profit and loss]. I just need someone to call me, bring me home and together we will create magic."

— Lance Tominaga

WALTER THOEMMES III (BArch '89, UH Mānoa) was selected as president and CEO of the YMCA of Honolulu. In his new role, he oversees the organization's 10 locations, and continues work on priorities, including youth development, and teen mental and behavioral health. Thoemmes previously worked at Kamehameha Schools as a managing director in its commercial real estate division.



WALTER THOEMMES III

JENNIFER LA'A (BA '99, UH Mānoa) was appointed as president and CEO of Lili'uokalani Trust. La'a started at Lili'uokalani Trust in 2022 as senior director of strategy and implementation then moved up to her previous role as executive director in 2024. As CEO, she will lead the 117-year-old ali'i trust.



JENNIFER LA'A

JULIAN AGUON (JD '09, UH Mānoa) won the 2025 Swedish Right Livelihood Foundation award, widely known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize," for advancing climate justice and Indigenous rights. A human rights lawyer, Aguon was recognized for his advocacy of the Chamorro people. He is the founder and president of Blue Ocean Law in Guam.



BRITTANY MONTILLIANO

BRITTANY MONTILLIANO (AA '14, Honolulu CC; BA '16, UH Mānoa) is the director of the Patsy T. Mink Center for Business & Leadership at YWCA O'ahu. Montilliano previously served as marketing director for the center and has helped lead business and leadership development programs supporting women entrepreneurs and professionals.

ROBERT PEARSON (AS '16, Kapi'olani CC) received the Walt Disney Legacy Award, considered the highest honor given to Disney employees. The award, which also includes a special blue name tag, celebrates individuals who uphold Walt Disney's vision: to dream, create and inspire. Pearson currently works as a merchandise coordinator for Walt Disney World.

NATALIE GAUVIN (PhD '24, UH Mānoa) was hired as a senior user experience researcher at Google, where she studies how people use search. Gauvin formerly worked in user experience research at TikTok and Meta, with experience in business monetization and product design research.

Are you a University of Hawai'i System school graduate and have a milestone you would like to share? Send an email to news@uhfoundation.org.

An Honor Among Chefs

CHEF KEONI REGIDOR, CO-OWNER OF TWO RESTAURANTS ON HAWAI'I ISLAND, RECEIVED A 2025 JAMES BEARD AWARD SEMIFINALIST RECOGNITION

by CATHERINE TOTH FOX

ON HIS FIRST DAY IN the Fundamentals of Cooking class at Kapi'olani Community College, Keoni Regidor was sent home.

His chef's coat wasn't ironed and his nails were too long.

"The next day, my nails were cut, my coat was ironed and I was clean-shaven," he says, laughing. "That [experience] taught me if you want to be here, be here. If you don't, don't come. There's no wasting time. You have to be in that frame of mind."



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KEONI REGIDOR

That was in 2001, when Regidor moved from Hawai'i Island to O'ahu to take specialty culinary classes. He worked at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. at Ala Moana Center, peeling shrimp while attending community college. In 2003, he earned a certificate of completion from Kapi'olani CC and returned to Hawai'i Island to work for Merriman's in Waimea.

Fast forward two decades, and Regidor, who now runs two restaurants and a farm with his best friend and brother-in-law, Brandon Lee, was named a semi-

finalist in the 2025 James Beard Awards for best emerging chef for Lehua Restaurant in Hilo.

"Honestly, we've been heads down, elbows down for 15 years," says Regidor, 45, reflecting on the relentless work. "[The award is] not just for me. It's for everybody, from the dishwashers to the cooks to our wives and families. It's validation for all of us, especially being from Honoka'a."

Regidor was born and raised in the small, historic town on the eastern coast of Hawai'i Island, into a family of cooks.

A RECIPE FROM CHEF KEONI REGIDOR

TINONO

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cup shoyu
- 1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
- 5 tablespoons patis
- 1/2 cup water (optional; omit for stronger flavor)
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 4 ounces tomato, quartered and thinly sliced
- 2 ounces red onion, julienned
- Green onions, sliced
- 1 tablespoon garlic, chopped
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 3 bay leaves
- 3 tablespoons calamansi juice
- 2 pounds boneless pork butt or shoulder, thinly sliced

DIRECTIONS:

In a medium sauce bowl, combine shoyu, apple cider vinegar, water, black pepper, patis, garlic, bay leaves and calamansi juice. Use a whisk to slowly add oil to sauce like a vinaigrette. Reserve 1/2 cup of the sauce on the side for finishing.



His cousin works in a high-end restaurant. His two aunts — both graduates of Kapi'olani CC's culinary program — recently retired from 1 Hanalei Hotel Bay on Kaua'i after working in the hotel's kitchen for about 40 years. (It was previously the Princeville Resort.)

"In my family, if you're not cooking, I don't know what you're doing," he says. "My family weren't the hunters or gatherers. We are the people who prepared the food. We're the party crew."

His experience working at Merriman's in Waimea, then opening Merriman's Market Café (now Merriman's Mediterranean Café) at the Kings' Shops at Waikōloa Beach Resort, laid the foundation for how he runs his kitchens at both Lehua and Nāpua at the Mauna Lani Beach Club.

"The way I run my kitchen is pretty much the way that kitchen ran," Regidor says.

The two restaurants — both Native Hawaiian-owned — are very different. The oceanfront Nāpua in Waikōloa Village offers upscale dining, while the more laid-back Lehua in Hilo focuses on elevated, locally inspired fare. At both restaurants, though, Hawai'i-grown ingredients and local flavors are central, from roasted kabocha topped with whipped goat cheese and local honey at

Nāpua to deep-fried taro drizzled with housemade garlic chili oil and pickled onions at Lehua.

One of his favorite dishes at Lehua — tinono, a Filipino sweet cured pork — stems from a family recipe. The appetizer, which consists of char-grilled marinated pork paired with fresh tomatoes, onions and a house sauce, is inspired by the tinono his grandmother made for family gatherings around Christmas.

"She would make it with cow tongue, which we could find in the store all the time," he says. "She would slice it super thin, marinate in shoyu, vinegar and patis, and cook it on the grill. It's fatty, tart, salty. It's a pūpū you eat on a Friday afternoon with a beer."

Regidor works with about a dozen local farms, sourcing ingredients such as taro, 'ulu, finger limes, mangoes and strawberries. The pork he uses comes from his own farm, Kaunamano Farm, which he started in 2014 with Lee.

Today, they have about 90 pigs, all fed a steady diet of tropical fruits, including guavas and star fruit, Okinawan sweet potatoes, macadamia nuts and bananas from Lee's own orchard.

"A lot of people don't know what we're doing here," Regidor says. "but what we're doing is pretty cool."

Once the sauce is done, slice the pork into thin pieces, no thicker than 3/16 inch. Marinate pork in the sauce for 2 to 3 hours or overnight.

Get your grill going and grill the pork, putting some char marks on it. Cook until the internal temperature hits 155°F to 160°F.

While the pork is grilling, put the tomatoes and onions in a bowl and pour the remainder of the sauce over them. This will break down the onions. When the pork is done, toss everything together.



SUSTAINABLE SIPS

Coffee expert and entrepreneur Shawn Steiman (MS '03, PhD '08, UH Mānoa) founded Grok Coffee in 2020 with a focus on sustainability and supporting Hawai'i's local coffee industry. He works exclusively with Hawai'i-based roasters and offers customers coffee beans packaged plastic-free in reusable jars through a nearly zero-waste program.

"We change coffees and roasters each week," he said, "and we always offer at least one Hawai'i-grown coffee and one coffee grown elsewhere." He'll also include decaf and dark roast through the jar program.

The idea for Grok Coffee grew out of a farmers market booth he operated for his previous business, Daylight Mind Coffee Company. What started as a simple booth name soon evolved into something larger.

"Once I settled on 'Grok Coffee,' though, it was clear I had a company that could do something besides pour coffee at a farmers market," he said. "I realized it was a chance to build a company that fulfilled a variety of ideals and ethics I had about what a coffee company can and should be."

Steiman recently took part in cohort five of a 12-week food business course at Leeward Community College's Wahiawā Value-Added Product Development Center, where he explored how to expand an idea into a new product, including a chipotle coffee hot sauce.

"I felt I had a product that could be commercialized, at least on a small scale. However, I knew nothing outside of my kitchen counter and figured I needed to learn the basics," Steiman said. He's currently working toward securing the funding needed to bring the product to market.

"I took the course to learn all I could and, as it happens, learned far more than I expected," he said. — *Christine Hitt*



PHOTO: COURTESY HONOLULU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

AERO INSTRUCTOR

Michael Willett

HOMETOWN

I'm from Kailua, O'ahu. I've always enjoyed aviation ever since I was a little kid. My dad used to take me down to the old Honolulu Airport, and so we had the central concourse with open air at that time. I'd watch for three hours, just watch the airplanes come and go. It wasn't anything to do with flying, although I enjoy flying, but I've never had the desire to do all the work necessary to be a pilot.

EDUCATION

- AS Aviation Maintenance Technician, '85, Honolulu Community College

I found out that there was an aeronautics maintenance program, so I took it up at Honolulu CC, graduating from the same program I'm currently teaching.

After receiving the certificate, I went to the South Ramp of Honolulu Airport, and I got a job at a tour facility and I worked there for at least five years. I enjoyed every minute I was there, actually. I enjoy shop work, so I was put in the engine shop right away, so that's where I stayed. I built up all those engines. That was my main job.

And then I went back to Honolulu CC to be a machinist. I did that and went into machine shop. I was

trained as a general machinist, using machines to cut metal, and then ended up in automotive for a little bit. I enjoyed it. Instead of just putting parts together, I was able to make them, so I enjoyed that because, again, that's still shop work.

Later, my machine shop instructor from Honolulu CC came and asked me, "You want to come and work at Honolulu Community College as a machinist?" in 1989, and so I said, "Sure."

Two years later, the administrator asked me to go down to the AERO department, and I said "OK, I'll go."

WORK

- Lead instructor and program liaison for the Aeronautics Maintenance Technology Program at Honolulu Community College

It's a typical two-year program, four semesters. We teach them in quarters, or eight-week periods, and we prepare the students to have an entry-level job and to take the certificate testing outside. So we do not give the testing. They have to take that on the outside.

There's eight courses total: two general, three power plant and three airframe. So they learn three areas. In general, they learn a bit of electricity, physics, weight and balance, general maintenance on the aircraft, nothing major. Then you get into the power plant section, where you're dealing with reciprocating engines, typically propeller airplanes, small airplanes. And then, another class has to deal with turbines or jet engines, and large aircraft. The other one is dealing mostly with propellers.

Once done with the program, they can take their written test here locally. If they pass the written test, then they make an appointment with an examiner (credentialed by the Federal Aviation Administration) on the mainland, where they take their oral and practical test.

If they pass all the tests, they can go and work for anybody nationwide because it's a federal certificate, not a state certificate, and all the airlines

Aloha 'Oe

will pick you up. The job demand is pretty high out there. As long as you get through the interview process, you'll probably be hired pretty quick.

TAKEAWAYS

Right now, nationwide, there's job openings. Not everybody stays here in Hawai'i; they move out, or they can also get a comparable mechanical job that they can use their credentials from aviation for. What you end up getting when you leave the school is a great mechanical background, a good start, and you've been trained.

I'm just trying to give them something that they didn't have before. I always try to tell them knowledge is good ... and so if we can teach them to work to a standard, that's our goal.

PROUDEST MOMENT

When students come back to visit and talk to us, we always ask, "What have you been doing? How's your life been going after four or five years?" And so there's one student who became an engineer, went to engineering school and then became a pilot and then didn't like engineering work. Now he's flying A330s over at Hawaiian Airlines.

I had one student; he was an older gentleman who was an electrical engineer. He came to my class and I taught him electricity, and he's an electrical engineer, but at the end, he wrote me a letter and he said, "Mike, thanks for a great education." That was cool.

Every student takes a different path, and it's kind of cool to have them come by. That's the greatest thing, to have them come by, visit us and tell us what they're doing.

This story has been edited for space and clarity.

Jean Hankin-Jones

(1923–2026) Pioneering researcher. Hankin-Jones was a cancer researcher and nutritional epidemiologist whose work advanced understanding of diet, ethnicity and cancer risk. She joined the UH School of Public Health in 1968 and the Epidemiology Program of the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i in 1983.

Walton Shim

(1931–2026) Hawai'i's first pediatric surgeon. A pioneer in pediatric care and longtime professor at UH Mānoa's John A. Burns School of Medicine, Shim helped establish pediatric surgery as a specialty statewide, serving as the state's only specialist for many years, and mentoring generations of surgeons. He also co-founded the Pacific Association of Pediatric Surgeons.

Larry Price

(1935–2026) (BA '67, MEd '71, UH Mānoa) Longtime broadcaster. Price was a distinguished UH football player, who later became head coach of the program from 1974 to 1976. He went on to a long career as a broadcaster in Hawai'i media, becoming a familiar voice on the "Perry & Price" radio show on KSSK and working as a television journalist.

Francis S. Oda

(1941–2026) (DArch '00, UH Mānoa) Visionary architect. Oda helped shape the UH School of Architecture and oversaw the development of many of the university's landmark buildings. He co-founded the design firm G70 and guided it for more than 50 years, receiving numerous accolades for projects such as the Four Seasons Lodge at Kō'ele and the master plan for the City of Kapolei.

John Morton

(1946–2025) Former VP of community colleges. Leaving a lasting impact on Hawai'i's community colleges, Morton began teaching chemistry and political science at Leeward CC, then became provost of Kapi'olani CC, where he oversaw its construction. In 2005, he was

named vice president of all seven community colleges, overseeing 34,000 students annually.

Faith Nālani Kanaka'ole

(1946–2026) (BA '01, UH Hilo) Revered kumu hula. A cultural leader who perpetuated Hawaiian knowledge and former Hawai'i Community College educator, Kanaka'ole also co-led the internationally acclaimed hula school Hālau o Kekuhi, founded by her mother Edith Kanaka'ole. She was also named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment of the Arts and co-founded the clothing brand Sig Zane Designs with her husband, Sig Zane.

Douglas Dykstra

(1948–2025) (MEd '75, UH Mānoa) Former chancellor of Windward CC. Often described by colleagues as a "gentleman giant," Dykstra spent more than 43 years dedicated to the UH community colleges. He began as a history teacher before becoming an administrator at Leeward CC, a role that prepared him to lead Windward CC as chancellor from 2009 until his retirement in 2018.

Colleen Hanabusa

(1951–2026) (BA '73, MA '75, JD '77, UH Mānoa) Political leader. From serving in the Hawai'i State Senate, where she became its first female president, to representing Hawai'i in Congress, Hanabusa championed Native Hawaiian issues, environmental protection and civil rights. In 2015, she was also selected by UH Mānoa's College of Social Sciences as Lecturer and Daniel K. Inouye Visiting Scholar.

Garrett Estrin

(1977–2025) Devoted soccer coach. Named UH Hilo's head soccer coach in 2022, he helped launch a new era for the Vulcans program, with a season-opening 2-1 victory over Cal Poly Humboldt. During his year at UH Hilo, he brought nearly two decades of coaching experience, focusing on building a competitive program while mentoring student-athletes.



KEEPING UP WITH UH ALUMNI

THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS FOCUSES ON ENGAGING ALUMNI AROUND THE WORLD by spotlighting their products and businesses, creating opportunities for young alumni to succeed in Hawai'i's workforce, sharing alumni success stories and more. The UH alumni community grows stronger each year, spreading its positive impact worldwide.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF UH FOUNDATION ALUMNI RELATIONS



SOMETHING SMELLS BAHO

UH Mānoa alumna Yasmin Dar (BA '06, MA '10 UHM) never planned to write a children's book. What began as a project with her sister grew into "Something Smells Baho," a story rooted in family, culture, and the desire to share language with the next generation.

An immigrant who moved to Hawai'i with her family as a child, Dar grew up in a household shaped by Filipino and Pakistani traditions. Her parents emphasized learning English as a way to help their children navigate life in Hawai'i. Years later, as a parent herself, Dar felt a strong pull to reconnect with and share Filipino language with her own children in a way that felt accessible and joyful.

That intention came to life through "Something Smells Baho," a playful children's book that introduces Filipino words through humor and everyday moments. Dar chose to self-publish, learning the process along the way and prioritizing access. Today, the book is available in public libraries across Hawai'i.

Dar describes her years at UH Mānoa as some of the best of her life, pointing to Hawai'i as a place filled with powerful storytellers. "There's a lot of people here who are so dedicated to preserving culture and history," she says. "I hope we never lose that passion to preserve such an important part of who we are."

To learn more about the book, visit somethingsmellsbook.com or follow along on Instagram @somethingsmellsbook.

SUMMER SEND-OFFS

Incoming students and their families were welcomed at Summer Send-Offs in the Bay Area and Colorado as they prepare to begin their UH journey this fall. The pau hana-style gatherings offered a chance to connect with the UH 'ohana, learn about campus life and get a preview of what awaits on campus.



ALUMNI PAU HANA GATHERINGS ON THE CONTINENT

Pau hana is a time to gather, reconnect and strengthen bonds long after the workday ends. For UH alumni across the continental U.S., it has become a way to stay connected to each other, Hawai'i and their alma mater.

This past year, alumni came together in cities from Arizona to Seattle, San Jose to New York City, rallying around the Rainbow Warriors while also building professional networks and meaningful friendships. Wherever alumni call home, pau hana continues to keep the UH 'ohana close.

DRAWN TO HAWAII'

UH alumna Shar Tui'asoa is the artist behind Punky Aloha, an illustration studio known for bold, place-based artwork inspired by Hawai'i, the Pacific and community storytelling. A graduate of Windward Community College, Tui'asoa returned home after studying illustration in California to build her creative practice in Hawai'i.

Working across illustration, murals and books, Tui'asoa blends traditional art foundations with contemporary design to create vibrant visual narratives grounded in place and identity. Her work draws from everyday island life, cultural memory and imagination. It has also reached national audiences through collaborations with Apple, Disney and Pixar, while remaining deeply rooted in Hawai'i.

As the designer of the 5th Anniversary UH Alumni Makers' Market artwork, Tui'asoa describes the opportunity as especially meaningful. "Being part of the UH system and contributing as an artist feels like coming full circle," she says. "It's about creating something that reflects community."

Through Punky Aloha, Tui'asoa continues to celebrate local stories and the power of art to connect people to place.



SERVING UP THE SEASON: MEN'S VOLLEYBALL PAU HANA

UH alumni and fans came together on O'ahu for a Men's Volleyball Pau Hana to celebrate the start of the 2026 season and rally support for the Rainbow Warriors. The gathering gave alumni a chance to reconnect, meet the team and coaching staff and be among the first to see the official season schedule. The event strengthened local alumni pride and built excitement as UH Men's Volleyball prepared for another national championship year.



STAY CONNECTED

Interested in attending an event, sharing your story,

or staying updated on UH alumni news and discounts? Update your contact information by going to uhalumni.org/contact/update.



Keiki Corner

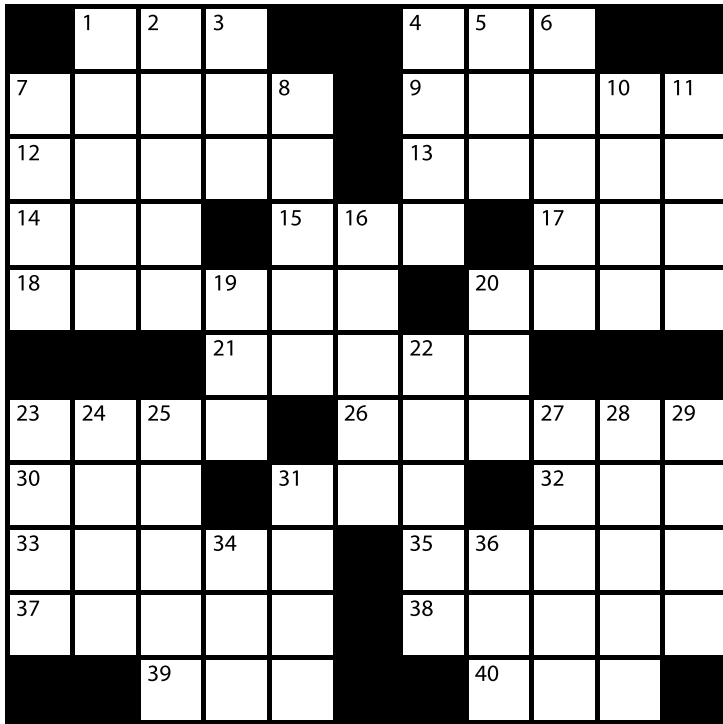
CAN YOU SPOT THE LOGO?

**HIDDEN THROUGHOUT THE MAGAZINE
ARE FOUR LOGOS IN RANDOM PLACES.
IT WON'T BE OBVIOUS.**



Happy Hunting!

Find the answers listed on page 3



ACROSS

- 1 Hanauma _____ or Michael who directed "Pearl Harbor"
- 4 Exclamation in a lightbulb moment
- 7 Andy Bumatai, or a collectible book featuring Superman
- 9 Mea _____ (Latin for "My bad!")
- 12 The Stan Sheriff Center or the Blaisdell
- 13 Dangerous part of a kiawe branch
- 14 Male offspring
- 15 KGMB is its longtime Honolulu network affiliate
- 17 Aunties long ago would make one with yarn and beer cans to keep the sun out of your face
- 18 Win the hearts of
- 20 Beckinsale who stars in "Pearl Harbor"
- 21 Animated Disney musical starring Auli'i Cravalho and Dwayne Johnson
- 23 Furthermore (synonym for 34 down)

- 26 Angelina Jolie's father Jon who appears in "Pearl Harbor"
- 30 Long's counterpart on a map, or muscle target for pull-ups
- 31 Hawai'i wrestling legend Kamaka
- 32 Graduate's neckwear
- 33 Email requesting an RSVP
- 35 Hiker's pathway
- 37 Vehicle by which Santa arrives on the beach in Waikiki
- 38 Four-legged Aloha Festivals Parade vehicle
- 39 Sizemore who appears in "Pearl Harbor," or Selleck who played Magnum
- 40 "Ninth Island" wager

DOWN

- 1 Number 5 on the periodic table
- 2 Add to or change, as a legislative bill
- 3 _____ and yang
- 4 Performs in a movie
- 5 "I don't understand what you're saying!"
- 6 2015 Hawai'i film starring Bradley Cooper and Emma Stone, or Hawai'i's all-purpose greeting
- 7 'Ukulele protector for storage or travel
- 8 Chocolate tree
- 10 Foolish person
- 11 Poker table buy-in
- 16 "Well done!" at a Hawai'i Opera Theatre performance
- 19 Genre for Jimmy Eat World and Dashboard Confessional
- 20 *Ocean*
- 22 "_____ Shore," 1987 Hawai'i surfing film
- 23 Baldwin who appears in "Pearl Harbor"
- 24 Kīlauea emission
- 25 Period of time at one job, or length of a sentence at Hālawā Correctional Facility
- 27 Sun + rain freeway hazard, or facial expression at a bad freeway driver
- 28 Bank job
- 29 Mahjong or Scrabble piece
- 31 Fill to overflowing, as fish in Mānoa stream or people at Kawai'i Kon
- 34 Additionally (synonym for 23 across)
- 36 Longtime KHON sportscaster DeMello, or what you might proverbially do to Peter so you can pay Paul

To view solution
or to solve this puzzle online:
uhalumni.org/reel_aloaha



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CNA Services



Personal Assistant for Transportation and Delivery Services

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- Medical and non-medical care
- Transportation
- Housekeeping
- Personal assistance



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Parting Shot

The UH Rainbow Warrior men's volleyball team won the NCAA national championship on May 11, earning the program's third national title. In the final match, the Rainbow Warriors defeated UC Irvine 3-1 in the NCAA Men's National Collegiate Volleyball Championship. The win marks Hawaii's first national championship in the sport since 2022 and further cements the program's status as one of the nation's top collegiate volleyball teams.



PHOTO: COURTESY UH MANŌA ATHLETICS

