

# Kūpono

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*Learning by doing*

UH Mānoa's Summer Undergraduate  
Research Experience takes students out of  
the classroom and into the field | **Page 4**



LISA RAPOZO, CENTER, AT HER KAUA'I CC COMMENCEMENT IN 2013

# Wai'ale'ale Project thriving in 1st decade

[ The Kaua'i CC program helps students beat the odds to pursue their dreams ]

**A** former teen mother and recovering addict.

A man who thought his lifetime work would be bagging groceries.

A Ni'ihau native with a six-year gap after graduating from high school.

These are only a few of the hundreds of students whose lives have been transformed through the Wai'ale'ale Project.

Since its inception at Kaua'i Community College in 2010, the Wai'ale'ale Project has impacted the lives of almost 800 Kaua'i residents ages 18–66. Nearly 300 students have earned a bachelor's or associate degree or a certificate.

Established with a generous donation from Jim Lally, the program receives ongoing sup-

port from Kamehameha Schools, the Scheidel Foundation and numerous other donors.

The Wai'ale'ale Project encourages and finances non-college-bound high school students and adults to attend, and successfully complete, their first year of college. The support has been life-changing for Wai'ale'ale students and their families.

Lisa Rapozo, a social worker with Child Welfare Services, was in the Wai'ale'ale Project's first cohort. After she graduated with an associate degree from Kaua'i CC, she went on to earn her bachelor's degree in psychology from UH Hilo.

Today she's only two semesters away from completing her Master of Social Work degree at UH Mānoa.



WAI'ALE'ALE CLASS OF 2018

# Q&A with Wai'ale'ale alumna Lisa Rapozo

## How did you hear about Wai'ale'ale?

I received an email at work, when I was with the First-to-Work program in the Department of Human Services. I assisted case managers helping single moms and dads on public assistance find work.

I thought the Wai'ale'ale Project was meant more for my clients than me, but my boss said, "I think this

would be a perfect program for you. You talk about going back to school all the time."

I was really scared. I felt I had missed out. I thought I'd be the oldest one in class and I worried I'd have a hard time. But my boss was always talking about his good times at UH Hilo. I wanted a taste of that, too. He wrote me a referral, and I got in.

## What obstacles did you overcome to achieve academic success?

Keeping my life balanced is the big obstacle. I'm married, I have two kids, and I work. Money is always an issue. I continue to work to support my family, making sure I have my kids covered. My husband has to handle a bit more when I'm at school at night, so we adjusted roles. It's a family effort, with everyone contributing.

Moving forward itself is motivating and humbling. There are mountains and valleys in life, and nobody's life is perfect.

My grandma earned her GED when she was 79! She's been among my biggest inspirations: if grandma can do it, so can I. She was my focus whenever I felt I couldn't do it.



## What effect did your success have on your kids?

My sons were about 12 and 2 years old when I went back to school. My youngest son is 11 now, and already talking about going into culinary studies at Kaua'i CC. They've both been exposed to college: they saw me through it all.

I was taking a practice test one night, and my oldest son Ka'imi could see that I had something wrong. He explained how to do the problem correctly. He helped me with math at home.

Today he is in the eighth Wai'ale'ale Project cohort, doing really well. I thought I'd have to be on him, but he knows to go to class, to correspond with his professors, and to communicate with everyone. I'm excited about our goal to graduate at the same time, me from UH Mānoa and him from Kaua'i CC. Now he's hoping to get his bachelor's in psychology. 🌺

ABOVE: LISA RAPOZO WITH HER GRANDMOTHER AND INSPIRATION MILDRED KUKI KOLO CHOW IN 2013. RIGHT: RAPOZO, WHO WAS IN THE FIRST WAI'ALE'ALE PROJECT COHORT, AND HER SON KA'IMI GONZALEZ, NOW IN THE PROGRAM'S EIGHTH COHORT, CELEBRATE WAI'ALE'ALE'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY ON JULY 26. IMAGE CREDIT: DENNIS FUJIMOTO, KAUA'I MIDWEEK



## Mānoa undergrads conduct real-world research while serving the community

Summer program brings students to Lyon Arboretum for research in the field

The students were from a wide swath of disciplines and devotions, including marine biology, theater, mathematics, psychology, dance and computer science majors.

On a warm July morning, they donned heavy work gloves, sinking to

their ankles in mud as they tended the native Hawaiian plant section at Lyon Arboretum.

The service project, which included lessons in caring for the ahupua'a and dealing with invasive plant species, was an organized activity of SURE,

UH Mānoa's Summer Undergraduate Research Experience.

"SURE has been amazing," said Gemady Langfelder, a junior dietetics major. "I've met a lot of really cool people with similar interests, and I learned a lot about graduate admissions."



GEMADY LANGFELDER

SURE builds a sense of community and place for students engaged in research with the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program.

“SURE helps students build other skills they may not necessarily get out of their specific research project,” said Jessie Chen, UROP program coordinator.

UROP students propose research and creative work projects under the guidance of faculty mentors.

They present their work at on-campus symposia, conferences and professional venues. Many are

published in national research journals.

Langfelder’s research explored possible relationships between carotenoids in the skin and fruit and vegetable consumption. Another student recovered the genetics of endangered tree snails with DNA from old shells.

In other projects, undergrads examined Filipino perspectives on Japanese occupation during the Pacific War and adapted a Hawaiian legend into a children’s picture book.

Jessica Ramirez, a food science and human nutrition major, assessed

the utility of diet quality scores for infants in Puerto Rico and Hawai‘i.

“My UROP experience was one of the best experiences I’ve had at the University of Hawai‘i,” she said.

Undergraduate research is a growing national trend. Studies show undergrads engaged in creative work and research outside the classroom are more satisfied with their college experience, more likely to stay in school, and more likely to graduate.

UROP improves student recruitment and retention, preparing

UH Mānoa students to be engaged community members.

The Harold K. L. Castle Foundation generously supports the SURE and UROP programs.

“Making the student experience more relevant, and ensuring a connection with a committed faculty mentor, UROP contributes to the success of Hawai‘i’s emerging leaders,” said president & CEO Terrence George.

“When young people are engaged with pressing real-world challenges, the whole community benefits.” 🌿



STUDENTS REMOVED INVASIVE PLANTS AT LYON ARBORETUM AS PART OF UH MĀNOA'S SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE.

# CIP keeps growing with support from local partners

## Y. Hata & Co. sponsors new culinary lab

“Sponsoring this lab is a big event for our whole family,” Valerie Hata said. “We want our culinary students to have facilities and opportunities to take them wherever they want to go.”

“And this place looks awesome,” said Valerie’s husband Russell Hata, President and CEO of Y. Hata & Co., Limited.

The new Y. Hata & Co. Advanced Pacific Regional Cuisine Lab at the Culinary Institute of the Pacific features a working kitchen with eight complete cooking stations for Hawai‘i’s next wave of chefs.

Y. Hata has a long history of supporting education in Hawai‘i, and an even longer history of delivering food products and restaurant supplies to Hawai‘i businesses.

The company began as a mom-and-pop operation in Hilo in 1913. Founder Yoichi Hata transformed his modest backyard business into a statewide foodservice distribution network. Three generations later, it is still an innovative family business, whose forward thinking means investing in Hawai‘i’s culinary future.

“Y. Hata contributes in many different ways, through scholarships, sponsoring our nationally competitive teams, and naming this lab,” said Grant Itomitsu, Kapi‘olani CC culinary arts chair. “Every student who’s passed through our classrooms has been helped by the Hata family’s generosity.”



## Takitani Foundation ups gift by \$2.5 million

Culinary students will also benefit from generous support by the Mamoru and Aiko Takitani Foundation. Recently the CIP team celebrated the Takitani Foundation’s new gift that builds on their 2017 gift of \$1.1 million, bringing their total support for construction and programs of the CIP to \$3.6 million. In recognition of their generosity, the innovation center building at the CIP will be named the Mamoru and Aiko Takitani Innovation Center.

The Takitanis, founders of Hawaiian Host, created the Takitani Foundation to express their appreciation to the local community for its support of Hawaiian Host products. A portion of all proceeds from Hawaiian Host product sales supports the Takitani Foundation. Since inception, the Takitani Foundation has provided scholarships to Hawai‘i students who exemplify the values that the Takitanis lived by: hard work, high academic achievement, commitment to excellence and community service.

ABOVE: TAKITANI FOUNDATION PRESENTS ITS FULL GIFT TO THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF THE PACIFIC.  
BELOW: RUSSELL & VALERIE HATA, CENTER, CELEBRATE THE NEW Y. HATA LAB AT CIP.





# Sending graduate students *into the blue*

When Dr. Peter Castro was still an undergrad at the University of Puerto Rico, one of his professors, Dr. Jack Randall, was a UH alumnus.

“He pushed me to apply to grad school at Mānoa,” says Castro, a retired professor of biology at Cal Poly Pomona. “I’d never been on a plane or left the island. I was very green.”

Castro earned a teaching assistantship in the Department of Zoology and found himself immersed in Hawai‘i’s culture.

“I didn’t have to wear shoes! It was wonderful. I wore shorts all the time. I had no time to learn how to surf or play the ukulele, though I did learn to body surf rather poorly.”

Most importantly, Castro earned his master’s and doctoral degrees at UHM.

“Hawai‘i has been a very important part of my life. It’s where I truly grew up.”

Castro did much of his growing up on Coconut Island, in O‘ahu’s Kāne‘ohe Bay, the home of UH Mānoa’s Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (shown above), where he had many opportunities for research, meeting great people, and “lots of diving.”

He says, “As HIMB’s caretaker for a year and a half, I had a place to live and do my research for free. I did simple tasks and shuttled people to the island and back. Coconut Island was a great place to live.”

“Yet I never got to travel to the continental U.S.; I never went to a conference until I completed my degree there,” he says. “We just didn’t have the funding. We were really isolated. This is what the scholarship is for.”



DR. PETER CASTRO  
IMAGE CREDIT: TOM ZASADZINSKI, © CAL POLY POMONA

The Peter Castro HIMB Graduate Student Travel Support Endowed Fund will subsidize graduate students’ travel to conferences abroad so future researchers will have opportunities Castro missed.

Additionally, the Peter Castro HIMB Summer Program Endowed Fund will pay for travel and general expenses in programs Castro participated in as a grad student and later as a visiting professor.

“The summer programs are excellent ways for students and local researchers to

expand their horizons. Way back in the ‘60s, I helped with one of them. I know from experience how valuable they are.”

Castro made a donation to establish the funds, also pledging part of his estate to bolster his support for programs remaining close to his heart all these years later.

Castro hopes someday to retire fully in beautiful blue Hawai‘i. “I miss the Hawaiian culture,” he says. “The soul of the islands became part of me. It was the best time of my life.” ❀

CORPORATE CORNER

# HECO encourages STEM education at UH

Hawaiian Electric donated \$50,000 to the UH Mānoa College of Engineering to support programs that encourage students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Two of the programs are intended to reach students during an important juncture in their lives and provide them with resources to excel.

The Native Hawaiian Science and Engineering Mentorship Program serves more than 100 underrepresented undergraduate students in STEM fields at UH Mānoa annually.

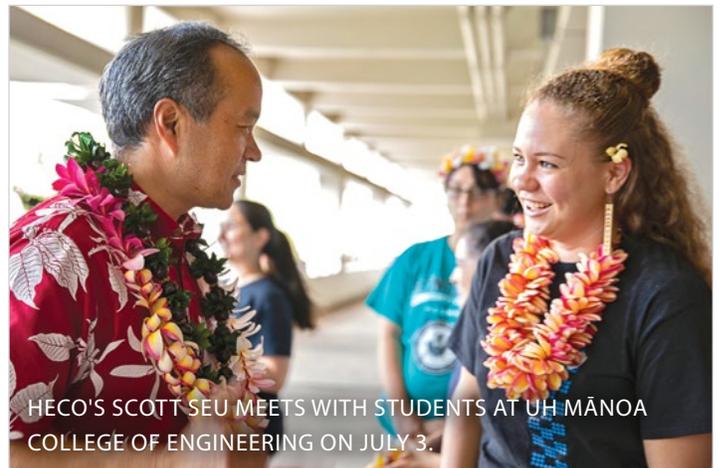
NHSEMP offers Freshman Bridge to support incoming college freshmen. The 10-week math-intensive summer program prepares students for college-level math courses and the

college experience through mentoring, professional development and cultural workshops.

After completing the program, students receive an educational stipend and are enrolled in gateway STEM courses and an introductory engineering course. They also receive continued mentorship and access to resources from the NHSEMP Undergraduate Scholars Program to support their ongoing success.

The second program, Engineering Student Ambassadors, was developed to increase recruitment and retention at the college.

Undergraduate ambassadors are hired to conduct STEM outreach and recruitment, especially in low-income and under-represented communities statewide.



“Being an ESA has helped me develop professional skills that are crucial to my career endeavors, especially in the areas of networking, marketing and leadership,” said Austin Yoshino.

“My work experience has provided me chances to connect with the industries and led to multiple internship opportunities,” he said.

“A sustainable and resilient future for Hawai‘i relies on building a 21st century

workforce of technology innovators, critical thinkers and solution-oriented leaders,” said Scott Seu, Hawaiian Electric senior VP of public affairs, a member of the UH Mānoa College of Engineering Dean’s Council and a Native Hawaiian engineer.

“That’s why we support educational initiatives that provide opportunities for students to cultivate their interest in the STEM fields and prepare them for success.” ❁