

# Native Hawaiian scholars awarded Mellon-Hawaii fellowships

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## MEDIA RELEASE

Three Native Hawaiian scholars were recently awarded Mellon-Hawaii Fellowships to advance their academic careers.



Marie Alohalani Brown, doctoral candidate in English at University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH Manoa), and Kaipo Perez III, doctoral candidate in zoology with a focus in marine ecology at UH Manoa, received doctoral fellowships. Katrina-Ann R. Kapaanaokalāokeola Oliveira, Ph.D., Geography (2006), UH Manoa, received a postdoctoral fellowship.

Now in its fifth year, the Mellon-Hawaii Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is designed for Native Hawaiian scholars early in their academic careers, and for others who are committed to the advancement of knowledge about the Hawaiian natural and cultural environment, Hawaiian history, politics, and society.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Kohala Center, with the support of Kamehameha Schools, established the fellowship program in 2008. The Kahiau Foundation joined the effort in 2010 and returns to support the program for the 2012-2013 academic year.

The Kohala Center administers the program from its headquarters in Waimea.

“The fellows continue to impress us with their exceptional degree of productivity, creativity, passion, and commitment,” said Dr. Matthews Hamabata, executive director of The Kohala Center and senior support staff to the Mellon-Hawaii Fellowship Program. “Given the global interest in indigenous perspectives, we are honored to support the development of new knowledge from Hawaii— for Hawaii and the world.”

A distinguished panel of senior scholars and kupuna (distinguished elders) assisted The Kohala Center in selecting this year’s cohort:

\* Panel Chair Robert Lindsey, Jr., member, The Kohala Center Board of Directors; and trustee, Office of Hawaiian Affairs

\* Panel Executive Advisor Dr. Shawn Kanaiaupuni, director, Public Education Support Division, the Kamehameha Schools

\* Dr. Dennis Gonsalves, executive director, Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center; and professor emeritus, Cornell University

\* Dr. Pualani Kanahale, distinguished professor, Hawaii Community College and member, the Edith Kanakaole Foundation Board of Directors

\* Dr. James Kauahikaua, scientist-in-charge, U.S. Geological Survey’s Hawaiian Volcano Observatory

The awards provide doctoral fellows with support to complete their dissertations before accepting their first academic posts, and provide postdoctoral fellows the opportunity to publish original research early in their academic careers.

Doctoral fellows receive \$40,000 each, and postdoctoral fellows receive \$50,000 each.

Each fellow works with a mentor, who is a leader in the fellow’s fields of research.

“Many Ph.D. students must find employment outside their field or as a graduate assistant, prolonging the completion of their degree,” said Dr. Kuulei S. Rodgers, Perez’s mentor and assistant researcher with the Coral Reef Ecology Laboratory at UH Manoa’s Institute of Marine Biology. “The Mellon-Hawaii fellowships allow advanced scholars the rare opportunity to focus entirely on writing their dissertations.”

Doctoral Fellow Brown is completing her doctoral work in the English department at UH Manoa.

Her dissertation, *Ioane Papa ʻĪī: A Nineteenth-Century Kahu Alii, Statesman, and Life Writer*, chronicles the life and contributions of Ioane Papa ʻĪī. A significant figure in 19th-century Hawaii, ʻĪī's place in Hawaiian history is often overlooked and, in many cases, inadequately documented. In 1810, at the age of ten, ʻĪī began serving in the royal household of King Kamehameha I as a kahu alii (attendant or guardian for a high chief), and went on to become an influential statesman and writer.

“ʻĪī was an extraordinary Hawaiian — someone to emulate,” Brown said. “My work is motivated by a desire to spread awareness about the importance of Native Hawaiian moololo (a narrative form that unites both history and stories), which are invaluable receptacles of ancestral knowledge. Whether we retell ancestral moololo, write new ones, or engage in intellectual discussions about them, we ensure that our Native Hawaiian knowledge survives and flourishes, and continues to empower us individually and together as a lahui (people).”

Brown's mentor, Dr. S. Kuualoha Hoomanawanui, assistant professor of Hawaiian literature at UH Manoa, was herself a Mellon-Hawaii Fellow in 2009-2010. Hoomanawanui praised Brown for “her contribution to the larger field of indigenous studies in Hawaii, the Pacific, and around the globe. She is deeply passionate about what she is doing, and approaches her scholarship with a sense of enthusiasm and aloha that few students possess. It is the mark of a true scholar, a true native intellectual.”

Brown also holds dual bachelor's degrees in anthropology and Hawaiian language, as well as a master's degree in Hawaiian language, all from UH Manoa. Her master's thesis, *Ka Poe Moo Akua*, explores moo, or Hawaiian reptilian water deities.

Doctoral Fellow Perez is completing his dissertation, *Ecological Evaluation of Coral Reef Resources at Kahaluu Bay, Hawaii: Incorporating Science, Culture, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge*. Perez is pursuing a doctoral degree in zoology with a focus in marine ecology at UH Manoa. He also holds a bachelor of science degree in marine biology from UH Manoa UH.

Since 2009, Perez and other researchers have collected physical and biological data at over 200 stations in and around Kahaluu Bay on the island of Hawaii to evaluate reef resources and assess the health of the bay's ecosystem.

In addition to the collection of scientific data, oral histories — referred to as “traditional ecological knowledge” or TEK — are being compiled from Hawaiian elders of the region.

The combination of scientific and cultural data is used to determine potential effects of factors such as climate change and to develop solutions to protect and sustain these resources for future generations.

“We have tried to bridge the gap between science and culture through the incorporation of TEK into our research,” Perez said. “This has the power to change the face of research methodologies, and in doing so ensures that the immense knowledge of our kupuna are heard, documented, and implemented.”

Rodgers noted that Perez's innovative research approaches, cultural background, and dedication position Perez for continued success.

“Kaipo's traditional ecological knowledge and Hawaiian roots, coupled with an understanding of local politics and issues, make him a highly desirable candidate to work among the tight marine community in the state of Hawaii,” Rodgers said.

“The Hawaiian perspective integrated with western science can be a powerful tool in the marine field. The numerous hours and genuine commitment he has employed attests to his dedication to this vocation,” he said.

Postdoctoral fellow Oliveira's book, *Naming Maui: Mai Kekahi Kapa a Kekahi Kapa Aku*, will address the importance of place and street names on the island of Maui to Hawaiian history, including the impact of the Hawaiian monarchy era and colonization on naming practices. Oliveira is mentored by Dr. Noenoe K. Silva, Department of Political Science, UH Manoa.

The close bond that native Hawaiians share with their kulaiwi (ancestral lands) is evident in the naming of places across the Hawaiian Islands throughout history. Oliveira's book will also discuss how, when, and why places and streets were named in each geographic region on the island.

“My life goal is to increase the number of Hawaiian language speakers,” Oliveira said. “I am hopeful that my work

on Hawaiian street names will appeal to the general public as a means of increasing awareness of the meanings of Hawaiian words, and increase understanding of and interest in Hawaiian history.”

“Oliveira’s original research into the Hawaiian place names and Hawaiian language-centered geography of Maui promises to reveal more of the wisdom and treasures of our kupuna,” Silva said.

Oliveira holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Geography and B.A. degrees in Hawaiian Language and Hawaiian Studies, all from UH Mānoa.

Several of the fellows and mentors had words of encouragement for students with an interest in the scholarly pursuit of subjects related to Hawaii.

“Mai makau i ka hana makau i ka moloa (Don’t fear work, fear laziness). The path is long and treacherous. Stay focused and tenacious. You will eventually get to where you want to be,” Perez said.

“It’s a ‘kakou thing’—we move forward as a collective. Find meaningful ways to be a part of your community, and find ways to give back to it,” Brown said.

“Find a topic you are interested in, because it will spark that passion and excitement about your work,” Hoomanawanui said. “We are all traveling the path our kupuna — cultural experts, intellectuals and philosophers —laid down before us. If you ask your kūpuna for help, they will always guide you.”

Hoomanawanui summed up the essence of the Mellon-Hawaii Fellowship Program’s ultimate goal: “E holo mua kakou: let us all move forward together, for the sake of our lahui, to help make the world a better place.”

The Kohala Center will support the progress of the three Mellon-Hawaii Fellows in the coming year, and brings the scholars together three times on Hawaii Island.

For more information about the Mellon-Hawaii Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, visit [www.kohalacenter.org](http://www.kohalacenter.org) and select “Current Programs and Events.”

The application deadline for the 2013-2014 program year is Feb. 11, 2013.

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