

FINALISTS

STUDENT SEAT

- **Kelli K. K. Acopan**
- **Ian F. Tapu**
- **Brian P. Wild**

Kelli K.K. Acopan

Kelli Acopan is a graduate of 'Iolani School and the University of Hawaii at Mānoa, having graduated summa cum laude with her bachelor of arts in history this past December. She has plans to continue to a graduate degree in history, also at Mānoa, focusing on gendered social history in the United States. She is also a wife and mother to three school-aged children.

Prior to attending the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, she received her associate of arts in liberal arts at Windward Community College, where she served for 2 years as the president of the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i at Windward Community College (ASUH-WCC). During her term, Acopan served on various campus and system-wide committees, actively submitting legislative testimony, and collaborating with community organizations such as the Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club and the Kāneohe Neighborhood Board in assuring that the student voice was heard on policy and decisions from both the UH System and surrounding community. She also served as the Vice Chair of the University of Hawai'i Student Caucus (UHSC), filling in as the ranking executive member when Chairperson was unable to serve. In her executive capacity in both organizations, she has focused on student advocacy and involvement on issues both campus and system-wide, championing issues like student engagement, Open Education Resources, and administrative transparency.

Acopan continues to support student success through academic tutoring and outreach for students aged K-12 and beyond as well as teaching an after-school STEM program to elementary school students. In the near future, she hopes to expand her resume to include teaching and mentoring students in local DOE schools and in community adult education programs.

Acopan is a member of the Alpha Lambda Theta Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa National Honor Society (PTK) at Windward Community College, and at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, the Alpha Beta Epsilon Chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society (PAT) and the 130th Chapter of the Golden Key International Honor Society.

In her spare time, Acopan enjoys spending time with her family, gardening, baking, and reading. She is also an avid crafter, something that has translated into a local small business retailing and teaching papercrafting, scrapbooking, and cardmaking with a focus on capturing stories and celebrating everyday moments creatively while having fun. Her work has appeared on local crafting shows like the Joy of Crafting and in international online magazines. She also designs for multiple companies and manufacturers in the papercrafting industry.

Ian F. Tapu

Ian Falefuafua Tapu, named after his late Papa, is pursuing a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Hawaii William S. Richardson School of Law where he is currently part of the Lehua Scholars Program and a First Year Senator in the Student Bar Association. The first in his family to graduate from college and now the first to attend graduate school, Tapu attributes his educational journey to his courageous grandparents who emigrated from Samoa with a 9th grade education and his hardworking single teenage mother.

Born and raised in Hauula, Hawaii, Tapu is a proud product of Hawaii's public-school system. After graduating from Kahuku High School, he attended Dartmouth College and majored in Native American Studies and double minored in Public Policy and Education. The distance from home, the transition to college and the challenging environment required Tapu to step out of his comfort zone. In this process of finding his voice, Tapu began to be actively involved on campus. He was elected Student Body Vice President, a Rockefeller Leadership Fellow, a member of two senior honor societies, received the Dean's Prize and was selected as one of ten Marshalls to represent his class at graduation. In spite of his busy schedule, Tapu supported himself through college by working multiple jobs – an Admissions Outreach Intern, Women and Gender Studies Intern, and a hip hop dance instructor for those students needing PE credit.

Tapu moved back home following graduation to nurture a personal and professional passion revolved around youth empowerment. He worked as the Youth Coordinator for the Susannah Wesley Community Center in Kalihi, providing educational, health and career services for at risk youth, homeless young adults and teen parents. He then worked as the College and Career Counselor for the Native Hawaiian education non-profit Kanehunamoku Voyaging Academy, closely working with a class of 15 Native Hawaiian juniors and seniors from across the State each year while supporting and tracking 75 program graduates. He also managed, selected and disseminated the academy's \$50,000 scholarship program that focuses on maritime education.

In his various professional capacities, Tapu has been an ardent supporter of higher education and the University of Hawaii system. He has provided SAT/ACT tutoring, FAFSA workshops for parents, resume writing classes, organized campus tours, and been a mentor for first-generation college students. Tapu's most meaningful student, however, can be found not through his work with youth, but within his own family. He helped his mother navigate the application process, supported her during her time at Windward Community College and later at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In December 2016, Tapu's mother graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. Because he has watched his mother's struggles and personal triumphs as a nontraditional student, having a background working with youth, and his own personal educational voyage, Tapu is eager to learn, work collaboratively and affect institutional change as a member of the Board of Regents if given the opportunity.

Tapu's other passions include dance. He is currently a jazz and hula dancer for Rock-a-Hula: Legends in Concert show at the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center and also teaches hip hop classes to children ages 6 to 12 at Hypersquad Studio in Waipahu. He has danced with the Academy of Hype company, competing and placing at the World of Dance in Los Angeles and Hip Hop Internationals in Las Vegas.

Brian Wild

Brian Wild is a first-year student attending the William S. Richardson School of Law at UH Mānoa. Brian previously attended UH Hilo, where he graduated in May 2017 with his Bachelor's degree in political science and a Minor in history. Originally from southern California, Brian first visited UH Hilo in the spring of 2012 and immediately fell in love with the Big Island's down-to-earth, tight-knit community.

During his undergraduate career, Brian worked for UH Hilo's school newspaper, *Ke Kalahea*, serving as editor-in-chief for the 2016-2017 year. It was here that Brian got the chance to connect with students about important issues of the day, as well as interviewing subjects ranging from professors, judges, politicians, and UH administrators. While serving as editor-in-chief of *Ke Kalahea*, Brian was nominated to sit on the board of directors for the Big Island Press Club, becoming only the second student in the club's 50-year history to receive such an honor.

As part of his undergraduate curriculum, Brian interned in the Honolulu office of U.S. Senator Brian Schatz, where he saw up close how Hawai'i's elected representatives carry out their duties in service of their constituents. This helped inspire Brian towards pursuing a legal career in Hawai'i.

Aside from his studies, Brian is a lifelong admirer of the arts, including the stage. From elementary school through college, Brian has performed in nearly two dozen productions, most recently under the direction of UH Hilo professor Jackie Pualani Johnson in *Evita*, Johnson's final production before retiring in 2017.

Currently in his second semester of law school, Brian was elected by his peers to serve on the Student Bar Association, the law school's student government. Outside the law school, Brian sits on the UH Mānoa Student Media Board, which oversees the University's four student media programs: *Ka Leo O Hawai'i*, KTUH, *Hawai'i Review*, and UH Productions.

Upon graduating from law school, Brian plans to pursue a career in public interest law and human rights advocacy. Among his scholarly interests include constitutional law, immigration law, and international law. On the weekends, Brian is an avid reader, hiker, and self-professed foodie, who is incredibly grateful to enjoy the natural beauty and cultural bounty that is Hawai'i.