

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Oceania Student

GRADUATION CELEBRATION

2025





OAMI's Expression of Gratitude

To the Graduating Class of 2025,

Congratulations on your immense achievement of graduating from the University of Michigan! We are honored to be able to collaborate with you and your community on the inaugural Oceania Student Celebration. As the newest student celebration, this milestone symbolizes the leadership you have shown to advocate for greater representation and commemoration of your cultures and identities.

Your graduation is not just a personal triumph; it is a testament to the resilience, strength, and determination of your communities. Oceania is home to an immensely diverse range of indigenous cultures, which hold many ancestral traditions, and we feel fortunate that you brought your gifts to enrich the campus community.

When you reflect on your time at Michigan, you should take pride in what you have accomplished and use the wisdom you have gained here to guide your way forward. Remember the strength you discovered within yourself and the relationships that helped you grow as a person. Use these things to fuel your career ambitions, motivate your community service, and guide your decisions. Never forget how these were some of your first steps as a leader on a path to great things.

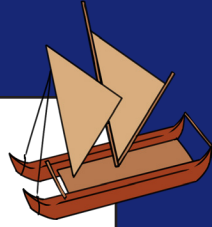
As you meet new challenges, remember to stay true to yourself, continue to learn and grow, and never forget the community that supported you along the way. You are a navigator on a vast ocean, sailing under the same stars as your ancestors and making your way to the bright dawn of your future. We look forward to seeing all the amazing things you do for your people and the wider community.

With gratitude,

The Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives



Order of Program



OPENING

Nick Sowizra & Kaia Tolu
Masters of Ceremonies

FAIKAVA CEREMONY

Nick Sowizra

LAND & LABOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Kaia Tolu

WELCOME

Dr. Tabbye M. Chavous
Vice Provost for Equity & Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer

REMARKS FOR GRADUATES

Rachel Dawson, JD
Consultant. Coach. Change-Maker

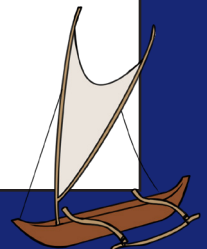
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Gisela McDaniel
Diasporic Indigenous Chamorro Artist

CLASS RECOGNITION

CLOSING

Hanikka Muña
*Third-year Medical Student, University of Michigan
Medical School
Oceanic Student Association (OSA)*





Masters of Ceremonies



Nick Sowizral

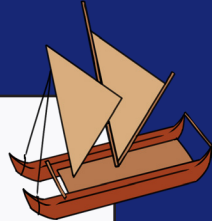
Nick Sowizral (he/him) is a second-year Doctor of Pharmacy Candidate at the UM-College of Pharmacy. He completed his undergraduate degree in Biology and Anthropology. He serves as Secretary of the Oceanic Students Association.



Kaia Tolu

Kaia Tolu is a third-year pursuing a degree in Media and Communication Studies. She is hoping to pursue avenues that intersect creativity and meaningful change. Her current passion is exploring how to rethink photography to be more interactive & imaginative through its visual storytelling.

Remarks for Graduates



Rachel Dawson, JD

Consultant. Coach. Change-Maker

Rachel Dawson is the powerhouse behind **Rachel Dawson Consulting**, where she provides individuals and organizations transformational coaching and consulting services. With a career built at the intersection of academic excellence and professional growth, Rachel brings deep expertise, sharp insight, and an unwavering commitment to equity and impact.

Previously, Rachel served as the third **Director of the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives (OAMI)** at the **University of Michigan**, where she championed student success, leadership development, and community engagement across campus. Before that, she was the **inaugural Managing Director of Precision Health**, leading a multidisciplinary, university-wide initiative to advance medicine and improve healthcare outcomes.

Rachel's leadership journey spans higher ed, law, and professional development. She has held influential roles including:

Assistant Dean of Career Services at Indiana University Maurer School of Law, where she boosted employment outcomes by nearly 8%.

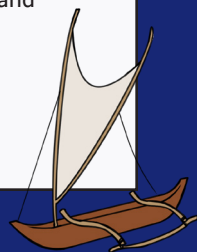
Director of Professional Development at Faegre Drinker, supporting 700+ attorneys and consultants.

Director of the Young Lawyers Division at the American Bar Association, where she pioneered innovative membership strategies.

Associate Director of Academic Support at DePaul University and adjunct professor at **John Marshall Law School**, where she raised retention rates for underrepresented students and led impactful community-focused initiatives.

Whether she's designing curriculum, leading strategic initiatives, or coaching rising leaders, Rachel shows up with clarity, compassion, and results.

Rachel holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a J.D. from Indiana University Maurer School of Law.





Keynote Speaker

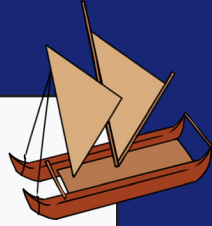


Gisela McDaniel

Diasporic Indigenous Chamorro Artist

Gisela McDaniel (b. Bellevue, NE 1995) is a diasporic indigenous Chamorro artist. Her work is based in healing from her own sexual trauma and reflecting the healing of people who have survived sexual, intergenerational trauma, and institutional trauma. Interweaving assemblages of audio, oil painting, and motion-sensored technology, she creates pieces that “come to life” and literally “talk back” to the viewer upon being triggered by observers. She intentionally incorporates survivor’s voices in order to subvert traditional power relations and to enable both individual and collective healing. Working primarily with women who identify as indigenous, multiracial, immigrant, and of color, her work deliberately disrupts and responds to historical and contemporary patterns of censorship as it relates to the display and exhibition of women’s bodies, voices, and stories. She aims to heal those who have experienced gender-based sexual violence, giving a voice, space, as well as a confidential vehicle for survivors to not only share their experiences, but to also explore how those experiences have affected them long-term. Based in Detroit, she received her BFA from the University of Michigan and is represented by Pilar Corrias Gallery in London.

Closing Speaker



Hanikka Muña

*Third-year Medical Student, University of Michigan
Medical School
Oceanic Student Association (OSA)*

Hanikka Muna is a current third-year medical student at the University of Michigan Medical School. Her roots are from Dededo, Guåhan, and she grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. She joined the Oceanic Student Association (OSA) shortly after matriculating to medical school. Since then, OSA has become a second home and a vital source of community and strength. Hanikka now has the honor of helping to plan and speak at the OSA graduation ceremony.

She is incredibly proud of the accomplishments of each and every one of her fellow islanders. Their journeys are a testament to the resilience, brilliance, and heart that define the Oceanic spirit. To the graduates—may you carry your roots with pride, walk boldly in your purpose, and continue to uplift our communities wherever your paths may lead. Hanikka is deeply grateful to celebrate this moment with you all—si Yu'os ma'åse' and congratulations!"





***Congratulations to the
Class of 2025!***



Master's Graduates



Jillian Fuss

School of Public Health

*Master of Public Health Hospital and Molecular Epidemiology;
Certificate in Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control*



Malia Maxwell

Seattle, WA

Rackham Graduate School

Master of Fine Arts, Creative Writing (Poetry)





Bachelor's Graduates

Isabella Wong

l'kahikoluoke'enalanimanaweletauokahonua
O'ahu, Hawai'i

Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy
Public Policy



Kolten Gusman

Katsuji (勝治) Makana

Līhu'e, HI

Stephen M. Ross School of Business
Business Administration

Chloe Berg

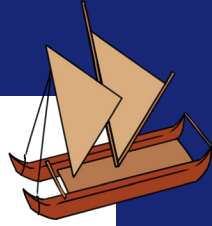
Guam

College of Literature, Science, and the
Arts

*Psychology; Sociology of Health and
Medicine*



Bachelor's Graduates



Taysia Morioka
Pulelehuaonalani, Takako

Kaneohe, Hawaii (Oahu)
College of Engineering
Chemical Engineering

Carly Salazar

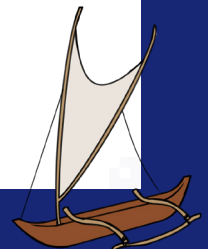
Sinahãñña, Guam
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Major: Anthropological Archaeology (honors), Minors: A/PIA Studies, Museum Studies, Gender and Health Studies



Sonia Kore

Melbourne, Australia
College of Engineering
Biomedical Engineering

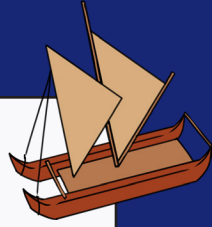


Booklet Artist Bio

Sumâhi Bevacqua is a digital artist and illustrator based out of Guåhan. Both a native Chamoru speaker and graduating Senior at John F. Kennedy High School, Sumâhi has a unique perspective on what it means to be a Pacific Islander student rooted in culture moving forward into higher education. Alongside preparing for graduation, Sumâhi supports the work of two Guam-based indigenous media projects, The Guam Bus and Fanachu! through art, language speaking, and content creation.



About the Committee



The Oceania Student Celebration Committee is made up of involved students and a staff member from the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives. This year, the committee came together to decide how to honor and celebrate students of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander heritage.

The committee works together on several aspects of the celebration, including the theme, marketing and media, graphic design and booklets, decorations, day of logistics, speeches, and community involvement. We are looking for more students to join the committee. If you are interested in joining the committee in the future, please contact Julia Barron at Juliajb@umich.edu.



Maekayla Dimatulac, *Sophomore, Sociology and Education Policy*

Being part of the planning committee has meant not only uplifting our voices, but also making space to joyfully honor, make known and celebrate my friends' journeys and the Pasifika community. Thank you to the Oceania Student Grad Committee and OAMI for helping make this happen!



Hanikka Muña, *Third-year Medical Student, University of Michigan Medical School*

This celebration and those like it are so very important to the community and I'm so honored to be a part of it. May this day be filled with love and joy with recognition of all the wonderful accomplishments each graduate has had. Y'all did it!!!! Si Yu'os Ma'āse to OAMI and everyone who has made today possible!





About the Committee



Carly Salazar, *Senior, Anthropological Archaeology*

So grateful for the opportunity to celebrate my fellow Pasifika students as we start the next step in our journey. Thank you to my committee and OAMI for all your support! Si yu'os ma'âse'

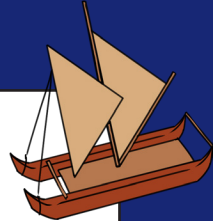


Julia Barron, *Staff*

Being on this committee has been such a heart joy! It has been a great honor to work with Carly, Hanikka, and Maekayla to help celebrate our Pasifika graduates and community. This student committee worked together to create a meaningful Celebration for our graduates, their family and friends, faculty, and staff. Thank you to Carly, Hanikka, and Maekayla for all your meaningful work and dedication. Without you, the 2025 Oceania Student Celebration would not exist! Congratulations to our graduates!



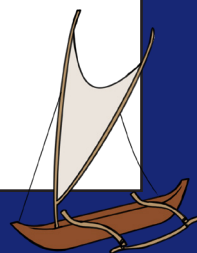
Oceania Student Celebration Mission



The Oceania Student Celebration celebrates the shared connections of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students at the University of Michigan. The ceremony acknowledges the value and uniqueness of the Pasifika experience and serves to commemorate the accomplishments of those students that participate in the celebration. It also recognizes faculty and staff who provide academic enrichment, research opportunities, programs, and activities that promote Pacific wellness to help students thrive. The Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, in partnership with the Oceania Student Planning Committee, institutes this annual celebration as a reflection of the University's commitment to diversity.

Oceania Student Celebration History

The annual Oceania Student Celebration is designed to uplift and highlight the accomplishments of graduating Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Pacific Islander students. Before the development of the OSGC, NH/PI graduating students participated in the Asian and Pacific Islander Graduation Celebration. The Oceania Student Association has advocated, alongside the department of A/PIA and Native Studies, to shift away from the US politically assigned identity of AA&PI and towards NH/PI identities as indigenous peoples. Recognizing the culture of NH/PI graduating students, the 2025 Oceania Student Celebration will be the first Pasifika-centred celebration at the University of Michigan. NH/PI graduating students will be honored with a celebration, allowing space for appropriate ceremony and commemoration of shared practices in a Pasifika-centred environment. The Oceania Student Celebration Student Committee plans this annual celebration to honor students of Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Pacific Islander heritage here at the University of Michigan.





Land and Labor Acknowledgment

The University of Michigan is located on the territory of the Anishinaabeg people. The Ann Arbor campus resides on land ceded through the Treaty of Detroit in 1807. Additionally, in 1817, the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadami Nations made the largest single land transfer to the University of Michigan, ceded through the Treaty of Fort Meigs, with the agreement that their children would be educated in perpetuity.

We assert the sovereignty of tribal lands and acknowledge the painful historical and ongoing genocide, forced assimilation, and displacement of Native communities in establishing the university.

We affirm contemporary and ancestral Anishinaabeg ties to this land, the profound contributions of Native American peoples to this institution, and the University's commitment to educating the children of Native ancestors.

We further recognize that whether you are on campus in Ann Arbor or elsewhere in the United States, we stand on land developed at the often-fatal expense of forcefully enslaved Black people. We acknowledge that much of this country, including its culture, economic growth, and development has been made possible by the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking, chattel slavery, and dehumanization through segregation and Jim Crow laws.

We remember those who did not survive the Middle Passage, those who were beaten and lynched, and those who are still suffering while fighting for their freedom. We are indebted to their labor and unwilling sacrifice, and acknowledge the violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact and generational trauma still felt today.

The fights against settler colonialism and anti-blackness will always be inextricably linked. To the land, to the collective, and to the ancestors, we thank you, we thank you, we thank you.



Letter of Thanks to Tabbye Chavous

Dear Dr. Chavous,

We are deeply grateful for you joining us this evening in celebrating our Oceania student graduates. With this being the inaugural year of our celebration, we want to thank you for your support in making all of this possible.

For over 25 years, you have been a leader, teacher, mentor, and advocate here at the University of Michigan. That means generations of students have had the privilege of learning from you and working with you in scholarship and cross-campus engagement. You have demonstrated your unceasing commitment to the service of so many communities like ours.

We are so appreciative of your support for OAMI and our student-led organizing committee. You have helped begin a tradition of honoring our Oceania community, a community that will only continue to grow and flourish at Michigan.

Si yu'os ma'āse' and mahalo nui loa for your commitment to supporting student-based communities. We thank you for your work in diversity, equity, and inclusion, making our university a more enriching and vibrant place to be, and we hope you come back to join us for the many years of Oceania Student Celebrations yet to come!

Sincerely,

The 2025 Oceania Student Celebration Committee



Statement of Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression

The University of Michigan strives to create an open forum in which diverse opinions can be expressed and heard. Members of the University community, speakers, artists, and other invited guests have a right to express their views and opinions, and the University will protect that right. The University also supports the rights of those with differing views to express their opinions. In the interest of protecting these rights for all, speech that breaks the law, violates the University of Michigan's code of conduct, or threatens harm to another person will not be tolerated. Persons engaging in such speech may be warned by University representatives, and if the warnings are not heeded, may be removed from the building. The policy extends and affirms University policies set forth by our Civil Liberties Board in our Student Handbook; and in the U-M Standard Practice Guide; Regents Ordinance Article XII, Section 1; and state statutes.

Nondiscrimination Policy Statement

The University of Michigan, as an equal opportunity/employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination. The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions. (Standard Practice Guide Policies)

Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to the Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office, 2072 Administrative Services Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1432. Phone: 734-763-0235, TTY 734-647-1388. Email: ecrtooffice@umich.edu.

For other University of Michigan information, call 734-764-1817.

Regents of the University of Michigan

Jordan B. Acker, Huntington Woods

Michael J. Behm, Grand Blanc

Mark J. Bernstein, Ann Arbor

Paul W. Brown, Ann Arbor

Sarah Hubbard, Okemos

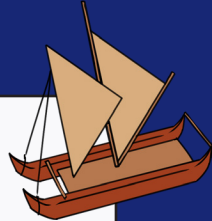
Denise Ilitch, Birmingham

Carl J. Myers, Dearborn

Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor, chair

Santa J. Ono, *ex officio*, President

OAMI Student Celebrations

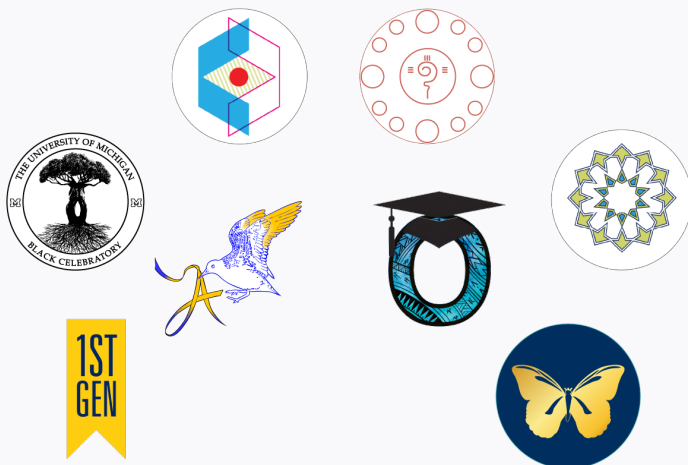


OAMI Student Celebrations take place during graduation season to honor the achievements, shared experiences, and diverse backgrounds that shape our students' journeys.

All of OAMI's celebrations are open to all students at the University of Michigan, recognizing and honoring the diverse experiences and identities within our community.

Celebration Symbols

These symbols are used by OAMI and the organizing committees to represent the eight student celebrations:

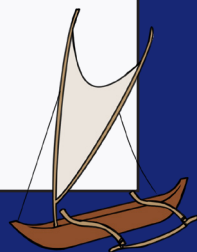


Native Student Celebration
La Celebración Latina

Black Celebratory
Asian Student Celebration
Oceania Student Celebration
Middle Eastern & North African Student Celebration

First-Generation Student Celebration
Undocumented Student Celebration

oami.umich.edu/celebrations





OFFICE OF ACADEMIC MULTICULTURAL INITIATIVES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN