

ONWARD HAWAII ➤

F E L L O W S

Cohort 1 Program Recap

2025-2026



Leaders shaping the future of Hawaii.



TONY BUTINDARO
Executive Director, Kamaaina Hale Apartments



DENISE DELLA-SABAS
Director of Business Development & Community Partnerships, Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center



MATTHEW LAM
Director of System Finance Center of Excellence, The Queen's Health Systems



BIANCA MORDASINI
Senior Director of Alumni and External Relations, Shidler College of Business



SEIICHI NAGAI
Founder & CEO, CivicNexus



BRIANNE YAMADA NITAHARA
Manager, Joint Use Infrastructure, Hawaiian Electric Company



ALY WEE
Owner & Hotel Consultant, Aly Wee Consulting



NATHAN YANG
Partner, Cades Schutte LLP



At Honolulu Hale, the Fellows met with Mayor Rick Blangiardi, Sherry Menor (Chamber of Commerce Hawaii's President & CEO), and Unyong Nakata (Founder & Principal of Nakata Advisory).



Senator Glenn Wakai (Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism) and Representative Greggor Ilagan (Chair of the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology) led a tour of Capitol.



Unyong facilitated a roundtable conversation with Sherry and Mayor Rick about everyone needing to play a role in making our community better, leading with courage and conviction, and staying true to our values.



Senator Wakai and Representative Ilagan also discussed the legislative process, what it takes to become an elected official, and how young professionals can show leadership.

SESSION SPEAKERS



RICK BLANGIARDI

Mayor, City & County of Honolulu

Prior to going into politics, Mayor Blangiardi spent 40 years in broadcasting, holding leadership positions at television stations in Seattle, New York, San Francisco, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Hawaii.



GLENN WAKAI

State Senator, Senate District 15

Senator Wakai is the Chair of the Senate Committee on Energy & Intergovernmental Affairs and the Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism.



GREGGOR ILAGAN

State Representative, House District 4

Representative Ilagan is currently the Chair of the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology. He previously served as a Councilmember for the County of Hawaii.



SHERRY MENOR

President & CEO, Chamber of Commerce Hawaii

Sherry is the youngest and first female president of the Chamber. She previously worked for Sony Corporation, Sony Entertainment, Estee Lauder Company, Elton John Productions, and 60 Minutes.



UNYONG NAKATA

Founder and Principal, Nakata Advisory, LLC

Unyong specializes in driving sustainable growth and enterprise strength through problem-solving and strategic partnerships. She serves on numerous nonprofit boards.





Gathered in a construction portable, Tracy Tonaki (D.R. Horton's Hawaii Division President) presented on the regulatory challenges the company faced when developing Hoopili in East Kapolei.



Representative Luke Esvlin (Chair of the House Committee on Housing), Sterling Higa (Chair of the Hawaii Community Development Authority), and Connie Mitchell (Executive Director of The Institute for Human Services) joined in.



Tracy and Lee Tokuhara (D.R. Horton's Director of Communications & Community Relations) led a bus tour of Hoopili, and the Fellows were able to see a model unit.



Representative Esvlin and Sterling discussed the efforts of legislators and policymakers to make housing more affordable.

SESSION SPEAKERS



TRACY TONAKI

Hawaii Division President, D.R. Horton

Tracy is passionate about building homes for Hawaii's families. Her company, D.R. Horton, is working on building nearly 12,000 housing units in the Hoopili community.



LUKE EVSLIN

State Representative, House District 16

Representative Evslin is the chair of the House Committee on Housing. He previously served on the Kauai County Council and co-founded a Kailua based outrigger canoe manufacturing company



STERLING HIGA

Chair, Hawaii Community Development Authority

Sterling is a co-founder and former executive director of Housing Hawaii's Future. He now oversees development of Kakaako, Kalaehoa, and Heeia.



CONNIE MITCHELL

Executive Director, The Institute for Human Services

Connie leads the state's largest nonprofit focused on ending and preventing homelessness. IHS offers shelters and other wrap around services.



ANGIE KNIGHT

Community Relations Manager, The Institute for Human Services

Angie is a spokesperson for IHS and plans community events. She also serves on the Honolulu Neighborhood Commission

TOPIC DEVELOPMENT MENTORS



CHRISTINE CAMP

President & CEO, Avalon Development

Christine is a well-regarded real estate developer in Hawaii. Her company has worked on multiple affordable housing projects and the redevelopment of Downtown Honolulu.

Fellows: Bianca Mordasini & Denise Della-Sabas



NANI MEDEIROS

Vice President, Commercial & Developer Sales, Title Guaranty

Nani was previously appointed by Governor Josh Green as the state's Chief Housing Officer and led housing-related nonprofits.

Fellows: Aly Wee & Nate Yang



TONY MIZUNO

Executive Vice President of Commercial Markets, American Savings Bank

At ASB, Tony has worked alongside many residential real estate developers to build affordable housing in Hawaii.

Fellows: Seiichi Nagai & Tony Butindaro



LEE WANG

Executive Director, Housing Hawaii's Future

Lee leads youth-driven advocacy and education efforts to ensure Hawaii's next generation can afford to live and thrive at home. He is also a realtor.

Fellows: Brianne Yamada Nitahara & Matthew Lam



At Ko Hana Rum in Kunia Camp, founder Jason Brand discussed how he transitioned from an investment banker to an entrepreneur and explained what it takes for a start-up to excel.



Jason provided the Fellows a tour of Ko Hana Rum's distillery and presented on the company's values, including using locally grown ingredients and taking care of their employees.



The Fellows also visited the Wahiawa Value-Added Product Development Center (WVAPDC) to learn about a facility dedicated toward helping local food-based entrepreneurs start up and scale.



WVAPDC champions, Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and DBEDT Deputy Director Dane Wicker, along with Hawaii FoundHer Program Director Darien Siguenza, spoke about needed improvements in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

SESSION SPEAKERS

**JASON BRAND**

Co-Founder, Ko Hana Rum

Retiring from investment banking, Jason set down roots in Hawaii and invested in sustainable farming ventures, aquaculture, alcohol, digital media, digital payments, programming and film productions in the state.

**DONOVAN DELA CRUZ**

State Senator, Senate District 17

Senator Dela Cruz is the chair of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means, a key committee responsible for reviewing the state budget. He also owns Kilani Brew Handcrafted Tea.

**DANE WICKER**

Deputy Director, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism

Drawing insight from his own entrepreneurship experiences, Dane leads statewide initiatives to diversify Hawaii's economy.

**DARIEN SIGUENZA**

Program Manager at Hawaii FoundHer Accelerator

In her current role, Darien focuses on supporting Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian women entrepreneurs.

TOPIC DEVELOPMENT MENTORS

**SANDRA FUJIYAMA**

Executive Director, Pacific Asian Center For Entrepreneurship

Sandra leads UH's innovation and entrepreneurship efforts, including strengthening ties with community stakeholders.

Fellow: Tony Butindaro

**MELI JAMES**

Co-Founder, Mana Up

Meli previously lived in Silicon Valley for more than 10 years where she co-founded and contributed to numerous startups. She returned home to help fellow entrepreneurs.

Fellows: Nate Yang & Seiichi Nagai

**IAN KITAJIMA**

President, Pacific International Center for High Technology Research

Previously, Ian was the director of corporate development and "technology sherpa" at Oceanit.

Fellows: Brianne Yamada Nitahara & Matthew Lam

**TRUNG LAM**

Executive Director & CEO, Hawaii Technology Development Corporation

Trung has more than 20 years of leadership experience and is committed to advancing technology in Hawaii.

Fellow: Bianca Mordasini

**LORI TERANISHI**

Founder & CEO, iQ 360

Lori leads an award-winning strategic communications company that counsels global corporations, startups, nonprofits and agencies.

Fellows: Aly Wee & Denise Della-Sabas



The Fellows visited the headquarters of Tori Richard, Ltd. in Kalihi and learned about Hale Tori's iconic brands, including Kahala. Mike Osario (SVP of Sales & Marketing) discussed the process of taking artwork and turning into apparel.



Mike, Cassie Louie (Kahala Brand Manager), and Michelle Hamachi (Head of Manufacturing) provided an overview of supply chain challenges and Tori Richard's efforts to keep the sewing trade's workforce strong in Hawaii.



At the Hawaiian Host Production Facility in Iwilei, Ed Schultz (CEO) and Bill Disario (COO) shared the chocolate and macadamia nut producer's values and commitment to keep production in Hawaii.



Chris Rabago (Senior Director of Manufacturing) and Michael Munoz (Senior Engineering Manager) showed the Fellows around the facility, which incorporates advanced robotic technology, while still relying on manual labor.

SESSION SPEAKERS



MICHELLE HAMACHI
Head of Production, Kahala

Michelle oversees Hawaii-based production of Tori Richard and Kahala brands. Previously, she served in production and e-commerce roles with always a.line Hawaii and In4mation.



MIKE OSORIO
SVP of Sales & Marketing, Tori Richard, Ltd.

Mike leads sales of Tori Richard and Kahala Sportswear products in 18 retail stores, two e-commerce sites, and hundreds of wholesale accounts throughout the U.S. and in several international markets.



ED SCHULTZ
President & CEO, Hawaiian Host Group

Ed is the president and CEO of HHG, a leading agricultural, manufacturing, and consumer goods company in Hawaii. Previously, he was the president and owner of Honolulu Coffee Company.



BILL DISARIO
COO, Hawaiian Host Group

Bill has over 30 years of experience in manufacturing, logistics, and supply chain operations across consumer packaged goods and agricultural industries. He previously worked at Dean Foods and Nestle.



CHRIS RABAGO
Senior Director of Manufacturing, Hawaiian Host Group

Chris oversees manufacturing at HHG. He is also the founder of Kona Roasted Coffee and has a wealth of operations experience with food processing facilities.

TOPIC DEVELOPMENT MENTORS



ASHTEN AKEMOTO
Co-Founder & Chief Engineer, Normal Robotics

Ashten previously worked at Astrobotic and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Now, he leads a growing startup, which is developing energy-efficient modular heat pumps.

Fellows: Seiichi Nagai & Nate Yang



CHRIS BAILEY
Manager, Wahiawā Value-Added Product Development Center

Chris manages a 33,000 sq ft manufacturing and teaching facility that includes equipment for food processing and packaging.

Fellows: Brianne Yamada Nitahara & Tony Butindaro



PATRICK SULLIVAN
Founder & CEO, Oceanit

Patrick is a scientist, engineer, entrepreneur, businessman, and author. At Oceanit, he leads a "mind-to-market" company that produces technology from homegrown research and development.

Fellows: Bianca Mordasini & Matt Lam



HISAE UKI
VP of Operations, Sun Noodle

Hisae works alongside her brother to carry on her family's legacy of Sun Noodle. Under her leadership, Sun Noodle has expanded operations to the Continental U.S. and Europe.

Fellows: Aly Wee & Bianca Mordasini



At the OUTRIGGER Waikiki Paradise Hotel, Kiana Biemes (General Manager), Jimmy Tokioka (DBEDT Director), and Lindsey Sanborn (Branch Manager, Hawaii Tourism Authority) discussed trends in the tourism industry.



Kiana showed the Fellows around her hotel property, explained how her team is paying tribute to the legacy of Princess Kaiulani, and spoke about how the hotel serves visiting customers.



At Hawaiian Airlines' headquarters, Diana Rakow (CEO), Jim Landers (Head of Operations), Daniel Chun (Managing Director), and Jacob Aki (Sr. Public Affairs Manager) spoke to the Fellows about the company's strategy and values.



The Fellows toured Hawaiian Airlines' maintenance hangar and learned about what goes into keeping airplanes safe. The Fellows also visited the Systems Operations Control Center and saw FAA dispatchers at work.

SESSION SPEAKERS

**KIANA BEIMES**

OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Paradise Hotel General Manager

Kiana is responsible for operations, guest satisfaction, and revenue for OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Paradise Hotel. She oversaw the recent renovation of the hotel.

**JAMES TOKIOKA**

Director, Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

Director Tokioka leads the state agency responsible for tourism and economic development. He previously was the Deputy Director for the DOT's Airport Division.

**LINDSEY SANBORN**

Brand Manager, Hawaii Tourism Authority

Filling in for Interim President & CEO Caroline Anderson, Lindsey focuses on destination management at the state agency responsible for managing Hawaii's brand.

**DIANA RAKOW**

CEO, Hawaiian Airlines

Diana is responsible for the performance and advancement of the Hawaiian Airlines brand and Alaska Air Group's business in Hawaii, including Honolulu, which is the company's second largest hub.

**JIM LANDERS**

Head of Hawaii Operations, Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines

Jim is responsible for safety and operational performance of Hawaiian Airlines, while supporting the combined company's operations in the islands.

TOPIC DEVELOPMENT MENTORS

**DANIEL CHUN**

Managing Director of Hawaii Public Affairs and Sales, Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines

Daniel oversees Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines' community and cultural relations, government affairs and sales teams.

Fellows: Bianca Mordasini & Denise Della-Sabas

**JERRY GIBSON**

President, Hawaii Hotel Alliance

Jerry has 44 years of hospitality experience. He has helped to develop some of the most iconic hotels in Hawaii and lends his time and expertise to a dozen industry and community boards.

Fellows: Aly Wee & Nate Yang

**CARMINE IOMMAZZO**

Vice President of Hospitality, MacNaughton Hospitality

Carmine oversees the management of three hotels in Waikiki owned by MacNaughton Group -- Hotel Renew, Lotus Honolulu at Diamond Head Hotel and Waikiki Malia.

Fellows: Seiichi Nagai & Tony Butindaro

**KAREN WATARU NAKAOAKA**

Sr. Director, Member & Community Engagement, Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau

Karen is the Senior Director, Member and Community Engagement at the state's largest tourism member-based organization. She is an expert in stakeholder collaboration and regenerative tourism.

Fellows: Brianne Yamada Nitahara & Matthew Lam