PRESIDENTS’ REPORT
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY–HAWAII | POLYNESIAN CULTURAL CENTER

ARUNA AND RAMANA SEERAPU’S TRIUMPH OF FAITH

PCC INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF ALOHA

2012–13
THANKS FOR GIVING! In 2011 donations made to BYU-Hawaii and PCC were directed by donors like you to

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Presidents’ Report outlines efforts and spotlights accomplishments related to fund-raising at Brigham Young University-Hawaii and the Polynesian Cultural Center. This newsletter is sent to donors and supporters of the university and PCC and is published by LDS Philanthropies in conjunction with the university’s and PCC’s presidents. For more information on giving to BYU-Hawaii or PCC, contact your donor liaison, visit giving.byuh.edu, or call 800-525-8074.

Whether you give to a specific priority, such as I-WORK, or without restriction to the Trustees and President’s Fund, 100 percent of your donation benefits students, and 0 percent goes to fund-raising costs.

Last year 3,400 alumni, friends, employees, and students donated to BYU-Hawaii or PCC. Your generosity helps us provide a BYU-Hawaii education to deserving students who will change the world.

Donations to the BYU-Hawaii Trustees and President’s Fund comprised more than one-sixth of last year’s gifts. Two-thirds of these unrestricted gifts were allocated to I-WORK and one-third to BYU-Hawaii Online.

100% 3,400 1/6

15%
PCC work-study opportunities

11%
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74%
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Seerapu’s faith brought them from India to study and work in Laie

Their amazing adventure began with a heartfelt prayer.

Ramana and Aruna Seerapu were doing well in their home in India. The young couple had each earned degrees, both were employed, and they were active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They had a bright, busy future.

Then a Church leader suggested that they consider enrolling at Brigham Young University–Hawaii to further their education. At first they ignored the suggestion. Then they prayed about it.

“We did not come because the mission president asked us to,” says Aruna. “We came because the Spirit told us to come.”

HARMONY AMIDST DIVERSITY

Ramana and Aruna are both studying business and are seniors at BYU–Hawaii. They now sense why the Lord guided them to Laie. Surely, their decision to come was a leap of faith. They believed that their Church leader was inspired and that their spiritual prompting was real, and so they gave up their lives in India to journey to another country, where they would experience a variety of cultures and further their education at a Church school.

“The first class Aruna and I attended was English 201—we didn’t know what that meant,” says Ramana. “We didn’t know it was going to be the hardest class we had ever taken. But at the beginning of the first class, the teacher invited someone to pray. A calmness came into the classroom; we felt the Spirit of the Lord. It was a wow experience for both of us. We love this place.

“We had studied in the British system of education,” continues Ramana. “Here it is different, but we learned. That first semester was tough, and we worked hard. This campus is great because the people carry a strong spirit with them. There is a harmony here.”

ALOHA CHANGES PEOPLE

Ramana and Aruna both worked at the Polynesian Cultural Center for nearly two years and now work on campus.

Ramana says: “I worked at PCC in the office. My manager was a great example to me. I loved working there and learned so much. At my PCC exit interview, I asked if I could keep my student-employee ID card to remember my time at PCC.”

Of her PCC experience Aruna says: “I was a customer service agent, and when the night show let out we would greet the guests and wish them aloha. They were touched by the show, and they would say thanks to me—just a student employee. The aloha spirit of this place is therapeutic. It changes people—it has changed me.”

EDUCATION BLESSES GENERATIONS

Ramana’s and Aruna’s experiences at BYU–Hawaii and the Polynesian Cultural Center have been possible because of the support of donors to the university’s I-WORK program for international students.

“We’re very grateful for the I-WORK financial aid program,” says Aruna. “Without this support there is no way we could have ever come here.”

Ramana says: “I know that education is expensive and that we’re recipients of someone’s sacrifice. I might not know the pain for each penny or each dollar that is coming to me, but I know it represents real work. I want people to know how much I appreciate what they have done for me and my family. Someday we want our daughter, Celina, to come here as well. She will grow up knowing that she is going to BYU–Hawaii.”

Above: Celina Seerapu’s parents, Ramana and Aruna, from India, are students at BYU–Hawaii. They were prompted to come and were able to afford a BYU-Hawaii education thanks to donations that support the I-WORK program. Read more about the Seerapu family online at give.byuh.edu/seerapu.
My wife, Margaret, and I had the marvelous opportunity to preside over the England London Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints several years ago. We loved our missionaries—just as we love all of our students now. During our three years in England, we met with hundreds of excited new missionaries as they arrived for their terms of service. Most came well prepared, having attended seminary, developed good study habits and self-discipline, served in their wards or branches, and made and kept commitments consistent with a gospel-centered life. Others, we recognized, were less prepared, and they struggled with the rigors of missionary work as a result.

I now see a similar situation each day with students from all over the world who are seeking the total education that BYU–Hawaii offers. Those students who adequately prepare for college by attending and graduating from seminary, establishing good study habits and self-discipline, serving in the Church, and keeping their covenants do very well at BYU–Hawaii. The key is preparation.

We want all our students to succeed, and so we encourage and give preference toward admission for these efforts and for English language comprehension study and classes via BYU–Hawaii Online or another institution of higher learning. As more and more students have recognized this responsibility to prepare, an interesting thing is happening: the number of those interested in attending BYU–Hawaii continues to grow. However, our existing capacity of 2,700 students means that we now turn away hundreds of qualified applicants each year. While we would love to accommodate all prepared and qualified students, we simply cannot do so.

POISED FOR GROWTH

This is why we are pleased that the BYU–Hawaii Board of Trustees, chaired by President Thomas S. Monson, has approved the first phase of a major university expansion. A primary reason why this expansion makes sense is that there’s a growing demand to provide quality, affordable, and innovative education for the coming generation of leaders in the worldwide Church.

Just like the preparation we expect of our students, BYU–Hawaii is laying the groundwork to accomplish its purpose. In December 2011 we broke ground for 11 new buildings on campus. More will be coming as we prepare for an increased enrollment of approximately 5,000 students. There will come the need for more funding of student-focused programs, such as I-WORK, our unique international-student aid program.

I am very excited about the future of BYU–Hawaii and invite you to continue with us on this exhilarating journey.
Job fair leads to job offers

BYU-Hawaii and the Yamagata Foundation funds I received helped me find a job through the Boston Career Forum,” says Sanshiro Nagano, a senior from Japan. “Once I arrived in Boston, my mind was focussed and my goals were clear. I had confidence I could compete with the world’s best.”

And compete he did! Sanshiro received two job offers—one from Goldman Sachs and another from Icon Partners in Hong Kong. He took the latter, where he will be trained as a consultant to provide research-driven recruitment for key job opportunities.

Along with 11 other students from BYU–Hawaii, Sanshiro visited Boston to attend the world’s largest Japanese-English job fair last November. Each year the event allows students to talk to companies in many different fields. Over 170 companies were present, seeking students who speak both English and Japanese to work in Japan, elsewhere in Asia, or in the United States.

“The preparation offered by Career Services and my participation in the Japanese Club at BYU–Hawaii helped me learn what was expected of me,” says Sanshiro. “As I researched different companies, I discovered what I wanted to pursue. I revised my résumé many times, and that gave me an edge in my interviews.”

Two other students accepted jobs in New York City. Shinji Naganuma will be an auditor with Deloitte LLP, and Shempei Yamashita will work for KPMG. Five of the twelve participants have another year of school, but they wanted to get interview experience at the competitively charged forum.

“I applied for sales, marketing, and management positions,” says Joshua Christie, a junior at BYU–Hawaii. “I discovered how my current skills and knowledge are valued.”

For those graduating this year, the experience was invaluable.

“Without the Boston Career Fair I never would have had the opportunity to interview with one of the best accounting firms in the world,” says Shinji. “I appreciate the donations that made this possible. I came to BYU–Hawaii because I wanted to mingle with students from other countries and study in an environment that emphasizes the importance of living gospel standards, such as honesty, morality, and integrity.”

PAYING IT FORWARD

Sanshiro says, “I want the donors to know that I am someone who never gives up. The money they provided is something precious. I sought every opportunity to increase my skills to become a more valuable asset in the business world.”

Sanshiro also decided to assist the career program in his own way. “I am now preparing students who will be going to Boston this year,” he says. “It is my way of giving back for the support I received. I want to help others.”

Left: Nearly 3,000 students from universities all over the country attended the Boston Career Forum in hopes of getting a job offer. Ten of the twelve BYU–Hawaii students who came to Boston are pictured. Before traveling, students worked for months to prepare for one-on-one interviews with prospective employers, and in Boston students get ready for their interviews, compared notes, and encouraged each other.
Surprising, inspiring, even electric are words used to describe BYU–Hawaii’s 2012 Empower Your Dreams event. An audience of students, faculty, and supporters listened as the emcee announced the results of the judging in the competition’s social entrepreneurship category.

The student who had produced the winning plan came to the stage and whispered something in the emcee’s ear. Hurried but quiet consultations ensued, and then the winning student announced he was switching his prize money with the runner-up. Stunned, the audience rose to its feet, applauding this impressive display of brotherhood.

When asked why he traded his first-place cash award, Ben Howells, a student from Sheffield, England, said: “I know these guys really well, and I believe in what they are doing. I don’t see them as competition. We are just as happy to see them succeed as we are to see ourselves succeed.”

Vulcain Yengo, from Brazzaville, Congo, whose plan was the runner up, says of the check switching: “What Ben did showed everyone that this wasn’t a competition—it was a conference for problem solving. That is what this school is all about: solving problems and bringing solutions to places where people need help.”

Giving and Receiving Are Interrelated

The Empower Your Dreams business plan and social entrepreneurship competition is sponsored by BYU–Hawaii’s Willes Center for International Entrepreneurship. The event is the culmination of a university-wide program that begins each fall at the Great Ideas Exchange, where students are matched with mentors, allowing students to hone business ideas into actionable plans. Over the next six months, many of these ideas develop and are presented at the Empower Your Dreams event in the spring. The entire program teaches students to think, plan, and do.

The mentoring and judging at the center’s two bookend events is done by successful professionals—supporters and alumni—who volunteer their time to help students.

Richard Tanner, volunteer director of the Willes Center, says of Ben’s decision: “Everybody was just completely amazed; many were in tears. This was a great example of what Empower Your Dreams and BYU–Hawaii are really all about.”

Ben graduated in April with a degree in international cultural studies and communications. His company and the winning plan, Akin Clothing, provides school uniforms for underprivileged children around the world, allowing them to receive an education.

Vulcain is studying supply chain management. His team’s proposed company, Entraide Congo, will teach entrepreneurial skills and mentor people as they establish businesses in Congo, which currently has an unemployment rate of more than 60 percent.

The Willes Center exists to help students like Ben and Vulcain succeed through entrepreneurship. Funded entirely by donations, the center provides students with practical entrepreneurship education and mentors them as they start businesses. Students who participate and meet requirements receive a certificate of entrepreneurship from the center.

Learn more at: willescenter.byuh.edu.
IN 2013 THE POLYNESIAN CULTURAL CENTER TURNS FIFTY

by President and CEO Von D. Orgill

October 2013 will mark 50 years of the Polynesian Cultural Center helping students obtain an education while acquiring valuable work experience. More than 18,000 students have benefited from PCC employment since we opened our doors. We are grateful for you—your support makes a real difference in our students’ lives.

PCC has always been about the students; they are at the heart of why we exist. Some people said this work-study experiment on the North Shore wouldn’t work, but a prophet said it would, and it has.

We hope you will join us in celebrating this milestone anniversary: special events are planned in Laie for September 1–8, 2013, and there will be opportunities for you to join in the celebration from home.

Our looking back is not a longing to go back; indeed, we are grateful to be at this end of the first 50 years! We honor those who led the way and acknowledge anew that the course we are on is charted by prophets. We are looking to the future, and it is bright. There is so much happening at BYU–Hawaii, and we are grateful to be a part of it. We, like you, love the students and are pleased to be a part of their Laie experience.

At the dedication of PCC, President Hugh B. Brown said that the efforts of the cultural center would attract attention to the importance of education and the Church’s support for it. With your help, we are doing just that. Mahalo nui loa!
Seeking the kingdom of God

Peter Xie grew up in China. After receiving an associate’s degree he worked in Cambodia, where he met missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At age 26 he joined the Church and soon learned about Brigham Young University–Hawaii. So Peter worked and saved, and after several years he was accepted as an I-WORK student.

At BYU–Hawaii he immersed himself in classes, devotionals, and service projects while also working as a tour guide at the Polynesian Cultural Center. He loved campus life yet felt something was missing. He yearned to serve a mission.

When he told his mother in China of his plan, she warned him that if he chose a mission, he would no longer be welcome at home. As Peter was wrestling with the decision, he listened to the April 2007 general conference of the Church. Elder Neil L. Anderson retold an interaction that then-Elder Gordon B. Hinckley had 40 years earlier with a young naval officer from Asia who was training in the United States. Peter thought the similarity to his own situation was striking.

Elder Hinckley asked the naval officer, “What will happen when you return home a Christian, and, more particularly, a Mormon Christian?” They discussed how he would not be welcome at home, how his career might suffer, and how he would be rejected by those who used to be his friends.

At last the officer asked, “It’s true, isn’t it?” When Elder Hinckley affirmed, the officer replied, “Then what else matters?” Peter repeated these questions to himself over and over. “It is true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?” He served with distinction in the New York New York South Mission.

PETER AND EUGENIA ARE GRATEFUL

As a returned missionary, Peter came back to Laie. He studied at BYU–Hawaii, and he again worked at PCC. He met his future wife, Eugenia, in the Aloha Center—a fitting place to find love.

“When we look back on our lives, we can’t help but marvel at the wonderful blessings of the Lord,” says Eugenia. “We came on different paths, yet the Lord was very kind to let us meet at BYU–Hawaii. We see His hand in our lives and know He has a plan for us.”

Peter and Eugenia graduated from BYU–Hawaii. Peter is now seeking an advanced degree at BYU in Provo, after which the couple plan to live and work in China, Peter’s homeland.

Peter and Eugenia Xie spoke to BYU–Hawaii and PCC supporters in Salt Lake City. Both are BYU–Hawaii and PCC alumni. Peter is currently pursuing an MBA at BYU in Provo, after which the couple plan to live and work in China, Peter’s homeland.

“Peter and Eugenia are grateful for the opportunity to attend BYU–Hawaii and PCC, and they are grateful for the support of the alumni community.”

—Sister Elaine S. Dalton, speaking to BYU–Hawaii and PCC donors on April 2, 2012