



**Solidarity with Kamehameha Schools
and Their Battle Against Students for Fair Admissions**

Resolution 25-26-01

Aloha USF Community,

ASUSF Senate stands in solidarity with Kamehameha Schools and the Native Hawaiian community, notably those individuals at the University of San Francisco.

In early September of 2025, Virginia-based nonprofit Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) launched a campaign against Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy. The SFFA states that they “believe that focus on ancestry, rather than merit or need, is neither fair nor legal.”¹ In Hawai‘i, families have access to around 294 public schools and 136 private schools,² offering a wide range of educational choices for their children; given these options, it is unfair that Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy—which gives preference to Native Hawaiian applicants as directed by Princess Pauahi's will—is singled out for criticism, since it helps to address historical inequities and serves a unique remedial purpose for the Native Hawaiian community.

For 138 years, Kamehameha Schools has operated on a preferential admission policy to Native Hawaiians as laid out in the founder, Ke Ali‘i (Chief/Princess) Bernice Pauahi Bishop's Will:

“I direct my trustees to invest the remainder of my estate in such manner as they may think best, and to expend the annual income in the maintenance of said schools ... and to devote a portion of each years [sic] income to the support and education of orphans, and others in indigent circumstances, giving the preference to Hawaiians of pure or part aboriginal blood.”³

In the historical context of Hawai‘i, Kamehameha Schools was in the process of establishment between 1885 and 1887, six to eight years before the illegal overthrow of the monarchy. In 1885, the first Board of Trustees released the initial description of the institution:

¹ [Kamehameha Schools Not Fair | Students for Fair Admission](#)

² [Public & Private Schools | Learning Policy Institute](#)

³ [Pauahi's Will | Kamehameha Schools](#)



“...it is intended that the course of study shall be specially adapted to the circumstances and needs of our island community, present and prospective, with no rigid requirements designed to turn out finished products of one particular pattern.”⁴

With the dwindling population of Native Hawaiians in the late 19th century due to increased colonial settlement, Kamehameha Schools education symbolized the hope for Hawaiian people, culture, language, and tradition in the midst of rising colonial oppression. The 1896 ban of Hawaiian Language imposed by the imperial American government demonstrates how the legacy of colonization sought to erase Hawaiian identity and culture, but Kamehameha Schools continues to resist the oppressive legacy left by colonization and aid Hawaiians through a culturally based education system, further symbolizing the hope that remains today.

Since its founding in 1887, Kamehameha Schools has graduated over 30,000 Native Hawaiians,⁵ and continues to support Hawaiians through numerous programs and grants.⁶ It is crucial to note that all beneficiaries and graduates come from highly diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds, touching lives beyond those of Native Hawaiians. Approximately 77% of Kamehameha Schools students receive some form of financial aid, demonstrating the institution’s commitment to accessibility and supporting students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.⁷ In a 2024 report, Kamehameha Schools awarded \$83.9 million to 87,882 individuals across Hawai‘i, some graduates and others Native:

- \$10.7 million to 1,131 for Early Learning
- \$5.2 million to 596 K-12 Students
- \$14.6 million to 2,306 Post-Secondary Scholars
- \$53.4 million to 43,544 Learners throughout the Community

Beyond these direct financial awards, Kamehameha Schools uplifts learners and families across Hawai‘i through extensive community-based initiatives. Programs, namely the 30 statewide preschools (1,777 students), summer learning opportunities, family engagement resources, and outreach through resource centers, connect thousands more to culturally grounded education and support services. Kamehameha Schools also partners with public schools, local organizations, and health providers to address broader needs—including health, economic stability, and cultural revitalization. As of 2024, the endowment was valued at \$15.2 billion, making it the only Native

⁴ [Prospectus Mission | Kamehameha Schools](#)

⁵ [Alumni | Kamehameha Schools](#)

⁶ [Grants & Scholarships | Pauahi Foundation](#)

⁷ [Financial Aid | Kamehameha Schools](#)



Hawaiian-serving institution with sufficient funds to reach the community beyond its classroom walls.⁸

Similar to USF’s motto, “Change the World from Here”⁹ Kamehameha Schools operates under a vision that aims to center its students in Christian and Hawaiian values, cultivating “global minded servant leaders and successful lifelong learners”¹⁰ who contribute to global and local communities. Similar to USF’s academic position on educational equity, Kamehameha Schools’ admissions policy embodies equity, offering preferential access to a culturally grounded education designed to address the impacts of colonization and systemic disadvantage. This approach moves beyond treating everyone the same to recognizing and remedying inequality, enabling equitable educational outcomes for all. As Kamehameha Schools prides itself on college preparation, focused on post-secondary planning and enrollment, the ASUSF Senate calls upon the campus community, allies, and supporters to stand in solidarity with Kamehameha Schools and the Native Hawaiian community in this critical moment, recognizing the importance of honoring indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and educational equity in our current political landscape.

As the representative of the student body, the ASUSF Senate has a responsibility to advocate for educational equity, diversity, and cultural preservation. Our actions and values must consistently reflect a commitment to indigenous communities. In doing so, we support marginalized communities and affirm the 138-year legacy of Kamehameha Schools in uplifting and empowering Native Hawaiian voices through education.

As a university that champions diversity, equity, and inclusion, the ASUSF Senate reaffirms its commitment to supporting indigenous access to education and protecting the unique institutions that serve marginalized communities. Kamehameha Schools is not just an educational institution but a vital legacy of Native Hawaiian self-determination and cultural preservation. The challenges posed by outside organizations overlook the historic injustices faced by Native Hawaiians and threaten the future of a community that continues to heal, rise, and strengthen its identity through education.

Sharing perspective as both a Kamehameha Schools graduate and a Native Hawaiian
Ayceton Aona, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Representative, ASUSF

⁸ [2024 Kamehameha Schools Report | Kamehameha Schools](#)

⁹ [USFCA Tagline | University of San Francisco](#)

¹⁰ [Mission Statement | Kamehameha Schools](#)



“As a graduate and continued beneficiary of Pauahi’s Will for the past 14 years, the cultural identity instilled in me by Kamehameha Schools remains central to who I am. It is because of the accessible, quality education rooted in culture and the remedying of colonial oppression provided by Kamehameha Schools that I, along with many of my constituents whom I represent, have reached this point today. While a student at the institution, I had the opportunity to work alongside students who were all Native Hawaiians, yet came from different backgrounds and had different stories to tell. No other place in the state of Hawai‘i, or in this nation, created a space where Hawaiian students, from different backgrounds and indigent circumstances (e.g., broken families, low-income households), could immerse in a culturally based education and realize that the oppression that we experience as Native Hawaiians is a product of imperialism. I also had the opportunity to attend numerous civic engagement events, such as Native Hawaiian conferences, Legislative sessions, and peace marches, to contribute to the resistance against oppression. Other students applied their expertise in areas such as sports, science, and writing to actively participate in supporting our community. It is because Kamehameha Schools created that space of opportunity and educational equity that students had the ability and voice to do so.”

Expressing gratitude to Kamehameha Schools and the opportunity it provided her.
Jade Hao, KSK graduate Class of 2023, Student at the University of San Francisco

“As an alumni of Kamehameha Schools, the campaign against its admission policy feels like a deeply personal attack. Without Kamehameha, I wouldn’t be where I am today. Growing up in the public school system, the education I received at Kamehameha was something I could never have afforded otherwise. As a boarder, I not only formed lifelong friendships but also had the valuable opportunity to immerse myself in Hawaiian culture. To me, Kamehameha is more than just a school; it is a sanctuary for Native Hawaiian students. Due to colonial influences, the Hawaiian language was illegal to learn or speak until 1978, and the Hawaiian culture was systematically suppressed and devalued for generations. Our history, traditions, and identity were pushed to the margins, leaving many of us disconnected from our roots. Kamehameha helps to reverse that damage by placing culture, language, and ‘ike Hawai‘i (Hawaiian knowledge) at the center of education. At Kamehameha, students are taught to embrace who they are as kānaka ‘Ōiwi (indigenous Hawaiian). We are given the chance to learn ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language), practice traditional arts and customs, and understand our history



from a Hawaiian perspective, not just the colonial narrative. The school provides a safe, nurturing, and culturally grounded environment where students are encouraged to thrive academically and personally. It gives us the tools not just to succeed in school, but to become leaders in our communities. The school serves students from all over Hawai‘i, including those from the neighbor islands, rural areas, underserved communities, and even students from the continental US. For many of us who come from low-income or single-parent households, Kamehameha is our best, and sometimes only, path to a quality education. It offers boarding, tuition assistance, and emotional support, creating access and equity where there was once none. Kamehameha Schools not only supports K-12, but it also uplifts students to continue to secondary education. They made it possible for me to pursue a secondary education through the Po‘okula (Head of School) Scholarship, and also gave me and many other Native Hawaiians the opportunity to earn an Associate’s Degree at no cost. These programs are life-changing. Kamehameha also connects students with internships, career pathways, and job opportunities that serve and strengthen the lāhui and the broader Hawai‘i community. It doesn’t just prepare students for the future, it helps build a better one. I am forever indebted to Pauahi and the opportunities Kamehameha has bestowed on me. To take that opportunity away from other Native Hawaiian students is not only wrong, it is unjust, short-sighted, and harmful to the future of our lāhui (nation/race). Kamehameha is a beacon of hope, healing, and empowerment, and it must be protected.”

Highlighting how Kamehameha Schools shaped education and identity, providing cultural and academic opportunities that empower Native Hawaiian students.

Wehiwa Donager, KSK graduate Class of 2023, Student at the University of San Francisco

“My journey with Kamehameha Schools started when I was four years old, with their local preschool in Kona, Hawai‘i. This was one of the only affordable preschools in the area and truly offered deep educational experiences, ones that I remember to this day as a third year USF student, such as learning to write and read, weekly cultural field trips, and problem solving activities. Throughout my elementary and intermediate school years, I had the opportunity to attend several enrichment programs during school breaks that really focused on teaching students about our history and cultural practices as Native Hawaiians. Once I got to high school, Kamehameha Schools provided me with a once in a lifetime education. The opportunities I received while in the boarding program at the Kapālama campus have allowed me to be where I am today, working towards an Environmental Science degree. My time here at USF is possible thanks to earning the



Po'okula (Head of School) Scholarship as a KS graduate and to the wonderful teachers and support I had throughout my high school career. I was able to learn the Hawaiian language, conservation science and botany through a cultural lens, be a part of a world class music program, learn about the true history of our people, and so much more. I use what I learned from my fellow classmates, teachers, staff, and community members everyday. Attending Kamehameha Schools truly has shaped my perspective and empowered me to be aware of concepts from indigenous science to fighting deeply instilled colonial oppression. I often think about how different things would be if I had attended the public school system on my home island. I will forever be grateful for what Pauahi's will gave me, and I strongly want to ensure that future generations of Native Hawaiian children have the same opportunities. This threat has the very concerning possibility of removing the largest opportunity for an affordable, world class education for the Native Hawaiian population. A possibility that is simply not an option if we wish to continue to empower all those who identify as Kānaka 'Ōiwi (indigenous Hawaiian)."

Therefore, we stand with Kamehameha Schools in its legal and moral defense, urging all members of the University of San Francisco and the community to honor and uphold indigenous rights, educational equity, and the obligations entrusted to Kamehameha Schools by the enduring legacy of Ke Ali'i (Princess/Chief) Bernice Pauahi Bishop.

Submitted by:

Ayceton Aona, *Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Representative At-Large, ASUSF Senate*

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