

Scholar Update

Featuring our current and past scholars



Crown Prince Akihito
Scholarship Foundation

Fall '25—Spring '26 Compilation Edition

CPASF Awards Ceremony at the Japanese Consulate

After a break in the annual Crown Prince Akihito Awards Ceremony brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we resurrected the event on May 13, 2025, at the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu.

Then Consul General Yoshinori Kodama hosted the ceremony for 2025-2026 CPASF scholars as well as a few from previous years. Those honored were: **Joseph Iseri**, **Shion Sasaki**, **Hiroko Saito**, and **Ryo Dobashi**. **Mr. Steve Sombrero**, CPASF Chairman, made the presentation of framed certificates on behalf of the CPASF board.



Literature department and an Advanced Graduate Certificate student in Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He received his Master's degree in East Asian Languages and Literature and bachelor's degree in Japanese also at UH Manoa.

His dissertation examines literacy socialization in middle-class Japanese families, documenting how the process of learning to read and write are wrapped up in culturally mediated beliefs surrounding child development, morality, and interpersonal relationships.

Joseph hopes to extend cross-cultural dialogue on educational policy surrounding early childhood literacy and highlight how culture influences literacy socialization. **Joseph** will be doing his dissertation research at the University of Osaka in the Graduate School of Humanities, Division of Japanese Studies.

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American Scholar Named for 2026-2027



The CPASF is pleased to announce that **Joseph Peters** has been named as one of the 2026-2027 American scholars.

Joseph is a doctoral student in Learning Design and Technology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. A third-generation Okinawan-Japanese American born and raised in Aiea, Hawaii, **Joseph's** commitment to U.S.-Japan relations is both deeply personal and professionally grounded.

He has a background in education with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a master's degree in both Second Language Studies and Learning Design and Technology. **Joseph** participated in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) in Uwajima, Ehime (2011), Hawaii's sister city.

His JET experience revealed critical gaps in ALT preparation and inspired his doctoral research. His current

research focus is on fostering professional development using Professional Learning Communities, where ALTs grow collaboratively utilizing peer social networks.

Joseph hopes his research will ensure that the JET Program continues to fulfill its mission to foster genuine mutual understanding between the US and Japan through improved ALT participant preparation and support.

Additional American Scholar Named for 2026-2027

Our 2025-2026 CPASF American Scholarship Recipient, **Joseph Iseri**, has been selected to receive a second year of coverage with our scholarship program for 2026-2027.

Joseph writes, I have been honored this past year to have had the support of the CPASF. It has undoubtedly opened many avenues, such as venues to present my research, build connections with Japanese researchers and new research participants, and meaningfully progress in my doctoral studies.

However, it has also led to new paths that raise points critical for satisfactorily addressing my dissertation's research questions.

Aside from the academic merits of my research, I believe an extension of this project will provide important answers to how Japan can serve as a model for early literacy education in ways that are responsive not only to the crises in education we face here in America, but also to the problems associated with the increasingly digitized and decreasingly analogue interfaces for text seen globally.

Japan's continued reliance and success with physical mediums for literacy may offer lessons for how children's socialization to literacy has been impacted by the rapid rise of digital texts in their homes, schools, and communities around the world.

As such, I hope to position my research as a touchstone for the future direction of U.S. education policy as it relates to early childhood reading and writing pedagogy and as a testament to what international and intercultural collaboration between Japan and the U.S. can offer.

CPASF Awards Ceremony

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Shion Sasaki (2025-2027) **Shion** graduated from Keio University's Faculty of Economics with a bachelor's degree in spring 2025 and entered Keio's graduate school in the fall. He was previously an exchange student at UH Manoa. He is a recipient of the Saitama Scholarship and is engaged in academic and cultural exchange as a Saitama Goodwill Ambassador during his studies abroad.

Shion's research explores the diversity and fluidity of gender and sexuality, focusing on the experiences of māhū (a third gender encompassing individuals who embody a gender beyond the traditional binary of male and female) in Hawaii. By challenging Western-centric gender frameworks, he aims to contribute to theoretical discourse and practical applications in gender inclusion. **Shion** is in a Master's

program in the Department of History at UH Manoa from fall 2025.

Hiroko Saito (2019-2021) **Hiroko** is a Ph.D candidate in the Department of American Studies, at UH Manoa. **Hiroko** received a Master's degree in English from the Graduate School of Letters, Arts and Sciences at Waseda University. She is currently working on her dissertation which explores the impact of Japanese anglophone writers in the pre-WWII period on the U.S.-Japan relationship focusing on women's autobiographies published in the 1920s and the 1930s. Her other academic interests are Japanese American literature, trans-Pacific studies, and gender and sexuality studies.



Ryo Dobashi (2021-2023) **Ryo** received his Bachelor's degree in Applied Marine Science from Hokkaido University. He also

completed the Nitobe College Undergraduate Program with honors. He received a Master's degree in Marine Bioresource and Environmental Science from the Graduate School of Fisheries Sciences at Hokkaido University. **Ryo** was honored with the Sasa Shigeo Award by the Graduate School for his academic achievement. He was a Ph.D. student at UH Manoa but graduated in May 2026. His research interest is Marine Geology and Geochemistry for exchange of gas between the ocean and the atmosphere.

Mahalo to the **Consul General Kodama** and **Mrs. Kodama** for hosting our 2025 CPASF Awards Ceremony. Thank you also to our friends from the UH Foundation, Center for Japanese Studies and the CPASF Screening Interview Committee who also attended the ceremony to show support for our CPASF scholars.

Two 2025 CPASF Travel Award Recipients Selected

We are happy to report that two of our CPASF scholars were selected to receive \$1,000 CPASF Travel Awards last year.

Ken Tanaka (2023-2025) applied in July 2025 for a conference that he attended in Bangkok, Thailand in April 7 to 10, 2025. **Ken** did a poster presentation at the International Diabetes Federation World Diabetes Congress. The title of his prestation was, "Comparative Analysis of ChatGPT-based Artificial Intelligence for Diabetes Self-Management

Support: Potential of AI Stratified Implementation and Customization."

This was **Ken's** Master of Public Health graduation thesis and his MPH Capstone project. It was about a study that conducted a comparative analysis of the usefulness, content diversity, and emotional receptiveness of responses in diabetes self-management support using ChatGPT.

Leah Wasil (2020-2021) applied in September 2025 for a conference she

attended in July 14 to 16, 2025 in Seoul, Korea. **Leah** presented her paper titled, "Shuri Castle: Monumental Vision of Third Space in Okinawa."

The presentation was given in a panel discussion titled, "Curating Memory: Practices of Heritage, Identity, and Cultural Imagination" the content of which sought to expand understanding of heritage making and story telling in East Asia at a community level.

Now Accepting 2026 CPASF Travel Award Applications

The CPASF is happy to offer these grants to current and former CPASF scholars to support their continued academic and professional development.

The committee is now accepting applications for the 2026

program year for travel in 2026. In addition to travel in 2026, applicants may also apply for the award retrospectively for travel completed within the current 2025-2026 academic year.

Deadline to apply is December 1, 2026. Please contact the CPASF office at:

myokomichi@jashawaii.org for an application form or for more information.

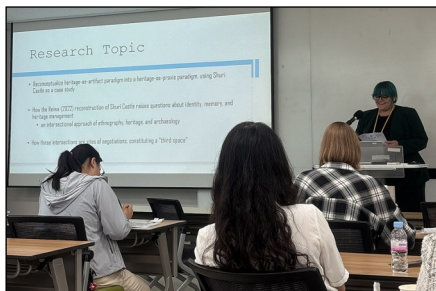


2025 East Asian Anthropology Conference—Seoul, Korea

Leah Wasil (2020-2021) writes, I was selected to present an individual research paper at the 2025 Society of East Asian Anthropology (SEAA) Conference, held July 14–16 at Seoul National University in South Korea. This prestigious international conference—jointly organized by SEAA, a section of the American Anthropological Association, and Seoul National University—focused on “Shaping Futures: East Asia as Practice,” emphasizing the role of emerging scholars in advancing the field.



My paper, “*Shuri Castle: A Monumental Vision of Third Space in Okinawa*,” was included in the panel **“Curating Memory: Practices of Heritage, Identity, and Cultural Reimagination.”** My presentation examined Shuri Castle as a dynamic site where contested histories, identities, and cultural narratives converge. I argued that heritage



should be understood not as a static object but as a set of ongoing social, political, and affective practices continually reshaped by individuals and communities. This theoretical approach contributes to broader conversations about the future of heritage studies and East Asian anthropology.

In addition to presenting my research, I engaged in extensive networking with scholars from across East Asia, North America, and Europe. These conversations provided valuable feedback on my work and helped build long-term professional connections. Significantly, one of the anthropologists I met in Seoul later invited me to present at another conference in November, demonstrating the tangible professional impact and extended reach that participation in this event provided.

My paper was well received by panelists and audience members,

many of whom expressed support for expanding heritage studies to embrace multivocality and lived experience. This research is a core component of my doctoral work; it will be developed into a dissertation chapter and later submitted for publication, enhancing both my academic trajectory and the visibility of our program’s contributions to international scholarship.

Attending this conference provided significant professional benefits, including international networking, scholarly feedback, and increased visibility for my ongoing work on Okinawan cultural heritage. CPASF funding for this travel directly supported my research progress, professional development, and contribution to the field of East Asian anthropology.



Leah (middle) with fellow CPASF scholar (L) Taiki Sano (2022-2024) from Japan with Dr. Christine Yano (R), CPASF Alumna and Professor Emeritus—Anthropology from UH Manoa.

2026 Travel Award Recipient Named

The CPASF Travel Award Committee is pleased to announce a recipient for the 2026 CPASF Travel Award. **Joseph Iseri** (2025-2026 and 2026-2027) received \$1,000 to travel to the 2026 American Association for Applied Linguistics in Chicago, Illinois. The conference took place from March 21–24, 2026.

Joseph writes, the 2026 American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) annual conference was held in Chicago, Illinois this year at the Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk Hotel from March 21 to March 24. The conference, which boasts 20 different strands of research and over 700 individual presentations, serves as one of the most popular platforms



for sharing research innovations in Applied Linguistics.

At this year’s AAAL, I shared my research on Japanese preschool teacher’s *directives* to children during cleanup time (i.e., how teachers told children to clean up). By closely analyzing teacher’s use of language and other resources (e.g., gesture, musical instruments), I showed how

Japanese teachers socialize young children into cultural values, such as responsibility and tidiness. My research contributes to our understanding of how Japanese culture is transmitted and transformed through the everyday experiences of children in Japanese preschools.

I also had the opportunity to meet with colleagues and senior scholars. Aside from catching up and talking story, we chatted about research, graduate student life, and post-graduation prospects.

I also got to join the Second Language Studies department gathering of SLS

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Joseph Iseri—2026 Travel Award Winner

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faculty, students, and alumni for dinner at *Pinched on the River*, a Mediterranean diner on the river



UH Manoa's Department of Second Language Studies dinner, table 1 and 2.

front. We had good food and great discussion.

All of this was made possible thanks



to the generous award from the Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship Foundation, who supported my ability to travel and present my research at AAAL in addition to the fieldwork I'm currently conducting in Japan. I'll be looking forward to next year's AAAL, scheduled to be held at Atlanta, Georgia.



Japan Scholar Named for 2026-2028



Takami Otsubo (2026-2028) has been selected as the new CPASF Japan Scholar.

Takami Otsubo is originally from Hokkaido, Japan, a region known for its heavy snowfall and rich natural environment. Growing up in

this setting inspired his initial interest in climate science. In March 2026, he received his Bachelor's degree in Earth and Planetary Sciences from Hokkaido University, where he specialized in physical oceanography and climate science. His research interests included ocean circulation and the interactions

between the ocean and the atmosphere. **Takami** was a master's student in the Graduate School of Science at Hokkaido University. Starting in Fall 2026, he will begin his PhD studies in the Department of Oceanography, School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Scholar Updates



Ryo Dobashi (2021-2023) completed his PhD program in Oceanography at UH Manoa in May 2026. He moved to Chiba, Japan soon after and is now working at the Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry in Chiba.

diabetes-focused GPT and thinking more seriously about how medical AI should actually be evaluated and governed in real-world healthcare.

Overall, my work right now is less about flashy AI and more about making sure these tools are genuinely safe, practical, and useful for patients. Thank you very much again for your kind support!

competent members of society, particularly in early childhood. Preschools represent one major arena where children must learn how to manage their belongings, bodies, and boundaries, and where caregivers must work to scaffold children into managing these things autonomously.



Ken Tanaka (2023-2025) Ken writes in January 2026, during the fall 2025 semester, I've been spending most of my time building on my recent medical AI paper, which looked at how different AI models handle insulin self-injection guidance, especially for older adults.

While all the models did pretty well on the surface, the study showed clear differences in consistency, safety, and how well they adapt to real geriatric needs. Lately, I've been focused on improving a customized



Joseph Iseri (2025-2026, 2026-2027) writes in January 2026, the past six months have been a whirlwind of professional and personal excitement, including travel to Australia, three academic presentations, and three completed manuscripts. This past June, I was able to present at the 19th International Pragmatics Conference, held at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. The talk focused on answering the question of how children become

In this talk, I focused on cleanup time - a contentious time for young children who are actively engaged in play. My goal was to contribute to our understanding of how Japanese children become simultaneously socialized to two well-documented aspects of Japanese society: tidiness and indirectness. My study analyzed the ways the teacher used verbal and non-verbal resources in getting children to clean up (i.e., *directives* to clean up).

Doing both quantitative and qualitative analysis with a method called *Ethnomethodological*

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Conversation Analysis, what I found was that the teacher rarely gave explicit instructions (e.g., "Clean that up," "Put that away"), mostly relying on highly implicit and conventionalized means for directing children (e.g., "Oh no, the scissors are left out," meaning, 'put away the scissors'). I also showed how the teacher's use of praise (and withholding of praise) was effectual in getting the stragglers to finally quit playing and start putting away toys.

A revised version was later delivered to students and faculty at the University of Osaka in July. This second talk concluded with discussant Dr. Yusuke Okada posing interesting questions about future research implications and key takeaways for early childhood education practitioners.

I was happy to receive comments and feedback from both audiences, and the paper is now under review for the journal *Language Development Research*.



Joseph talking with local librarians about literacy

In September, I was also able to present as a second author at Extensive Reading World Conference 7 held at Hokusei Gakuen University, Hokkaido, and the manuscript for that is also under review.

The connections I made through these conferences have opened other doors: I am now scheduled to present a different paper in June of this year with scholars I met in Australia and have joined several online labs for studying children's interaction and language acquisition.

Finally, aside from these wonderful side missions, I have been able to expand my data collection for my

dissertation on literacy socialization from within Japanese families to include community centers for literacy, such as social welfare centers, libraries, and preschools.

While data collection is still ongoing, the generosity and enthusiasm from community leaders and participants in my research has only further invigorated my efforts in fieldwork and writing. While I finish out the later half of my fellowship's tenure, I hope to continue analysis and start drafting the studies that will eventually make up my dissertation.

Joseph Peters (2026-2027) writes I will be traveling to Tokyo, Japan in mid-March 2027 and will start attending Aoyama Gakuin University in Shibuya, Tokyo on April 1, 2027.

My faculty advisor will be Professor Taku Sugimoto from the Graduate School of Education, Psychology, and Human Studies. My research will focus on professional development using online platforms within the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program for Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). To prepare for my studies and research, I have actively presented my research to gain feedback and establish connections.

List of Presentations:

Oral Presentation (Sept 11, 2026). "Professional Development: Investigating Professional Learning Communities for Assistant Language Teachers." J-CLIL Chugoku Chapter Symposium. <https://www.j-clil.com/english-schedule>

Roundtable Session (August 7, 2026) titled "Peer-Informed Professional Development: Investigating Professional Learning Communities for Assistant Language Teachers" at the International Conference on Educational Media (ICoME 2026), [proceedings](#).

Oral presentation (April 25, 2026). "JET Professional Learning Community: Informing Professional Development" College of Education's Graduate Student Research Symposium. [website](#).

Oral presentation (Apr 18, 2026). Teaching English in Japan and Professional Learning Communities. Symposium on Teaching and Learning in Japan. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DXNnUK9E0vb/>



Joseph (left) at the College of Education's Graduate Student Research Symposium.

Paper Session (February 14, 2026). "Bridging Experience and Practice: Practitioner-Informed Professional Development for Japan Exchange and Teaching Program Assistant Language Teachers", HITESOL [Proceedings](#).



Takami Otsubo (2026-2028) writes, so far, I've been having a great time in Hawaii. I am currently taking three courses while I am working on my research project.

The workload is very heavy and keeps me quite busy, but I am very happy to be surrounded by great researchers and friends.



Takami with his professors.

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Takami (far right) with his colleagues.



Volunteer work at the Northshore.

Shion Sasaki (2025-2027) Shion writes, thanks to the generous support of the Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship, I was able to begin my Master's program at UH Manoa in August 2025. My first year of coursework in History has strengthened my skills in archival research and primary-source analysis, while encouraging me to think deeply about the authority of historical sources.

My current research traces how the usage of the term *mahu* and perceptions and understandings of mahu have changed across different historical moments in Hawaii. By working with *Olelo Hawaii nupepa* (Hawaiian-language newspapers), archival materials, digital archives, and visual culture, I have become aware of the importance of how knowledge is transmitted from kupuna to younger generations in Hawaii. Taking a MUS Hula/Chant course with Kumu Noenoelani in Spring 2026 gave me the opportunity to learn how knowledge can be embodied, preserved, and passed on through cultural practice.



At the same time, my experiences in Hawaii have made me reflect on my Japanese roots. I was fortunate to encounter Chado (Way of Tea) here at UH Manoa, thanks in large part to the late Hounsai Sosho, whose tremendous support for the UH Way of Tea Club left a lasting impact, as well as the continued support of the Center for Japanese Studies. I served as a TA for ASAN Chado: Way of Tea Practicum course in Spring 2026, and since Fall 2026, I have been serving as co-president of the club.



We were also honored to receive an award from former Consul General Yoshinori Kodama in recognition of our work in preserving Urasenke school tea tradition and sharing the philosophy of Wa Kei Sei Jaku (harmony, respect, purity and tranquility) in October 2025.



Chado has become an important part of my life in Hawaii. After I completed the Honolulu Marathon in December 2025, some of our members came to cheer me on, and afterward we had a small *nodate* (outdoor tea gathering) at Kapiolani Regional Park and shared a bowl of tea.



With CPASF's mission of building a bridge between Japan and Hawaii in mind, I hope my practice of Chado, together with my research, will contribute in some small way to strengthening the bridge. I would like to say thank you for all the support that has made these opportunities possible.

In Memoriam



Tateuchi Foundation

Ina Tateuchi—Mrs. Tateuchi served as a CPASF Trustee from June 2009 until the time of her passing in August 2025 in Bellevue, Washington.

She was a strong financial supporter of the CPASF and made a monumental donation in 2009 to celebrate the CPASF's 50th Anniversary. No photo available. Private services held.



Ryoza Sakai—Mr. Sakai served as a Trustee from December 1999 until the time of his passing on November 3, 2025. He will be greatly remembered for his role in bridging Hawaii and Japan through the Sony Open golf tournament in Hawaii and placing the prestigious PGA event on the world stage. Private services held.

The CPASF *Scholar Update* is published on a quarterly basis. Please email updates and photos to: myokomichi@jashawaii.org for possible inclusion in a future edition.

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