

University of Hawai'i
Candidate Advisory Council

Brigitte Yoshino, Chair
Lance Wilhelm, Vice Chair
Blair Odo, Secretary
Amy Agbayani, Member
Amy Hennessey, Member
Brandon Marc Higa, Member
Dale Nishikawa, Member

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Josh Green
Governor, State of Hawai'i
Executive Chambers
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Governor Green:

On behalf of the Candidate Advisory Council (CAC) of the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents and in conformity with the provisions of Act 72, 2013 Session Laws of Hawai'i, I am pleased to present the following candidates to you to fill the following seat for the term to begin July 1, 2024.

One (1) student seat for a two-year appointment (currently filled by Regent Abigail Mawae)

1. Aaron Conyers
2. Joshua Faumuina
3. S. Janani Lakshmanan

The CAC complied with the statutory requirements and assessed candidates in a confidential, fair, independent, and nonpartisan manner. All candidates, as required by law, were asked to disclose any existing or anticipated contracts or financial transactions with the University of Hawai'i. Finally, with the assistance of licensed and accredited external firms, the CAC had background checks done on each candidate. Based on the applications and resumes submitted, interviews with candidates, contacts with references and background checks, the CAC believes that these candidates are able and willing to discharge the responsibilities of a member of the Board of Regents.

Brief biographies drafted by the candidates are attached.

If you have any questions, please call 956-9083 or email at borapp@hawaii.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brigitte Yoshino".

Brigitte Yoshino, Chair
Candidate Advisory Council

Attachments

- c: Senator Ronald Kouchi, President, Hawai'i State Senate
- Representative Scott Saiki, Speaker, Hawai'i House of Representatives
- Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair, Senate Committee on Higher Education
- Representative Amy Perruso, Chair, House Committee on Higher Education
and Technology
- Regent Alapaki Nahale-a, Chair, Board of Regents
- President David Lassner, University of Hawai'i
- Members, Candidate Advisory Council

Aaron Conyers

Aaron "AC" Conyers is actively pursuing a Master's degree in Asian Studies International Affairs at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. His educational journey began at Hawai'i Pacific University, where he pursued and attained a Bachelor of Arts in Diplomacy and Military Studies. Conyers is passionately pursuing an understanding of the geopolitical dynamics within the Asia-Pacific region, with a keen focus on the intricate interactions between politics, economy, and culture and their collective influence on regional and global affairs.

During his tenure in the United States Navy as a naval mechanic aboard the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), Conyers was deeply involved in the ship's Nuclear Reactor Department. This experience refined his technical expertise and nurtured a profound appreciation for diverse cultures and the intricacies of international relations, especially within the Asia-Pacific sphere. Conyers' commitment to service extended beyond his military duties to include volunteering with veteran support initiatives, where he leveraged his experiences to assist fellow veterans in their transition to civilian life. His dedication to community service is also evident in his involvement in officiating youth sports, where he contributed to young individuals' personal and athletic development.

In his leisure time, Conyers enjoys exploring the Asia-Pacific's rich cultural heritage and historical landscapes through travel and culinary adventures. He is also an avid reader and participant in outdoor activities, further enriching his personal and professional life. Conyers' multifaceted engagements reflect a commitment to lifelong learning, community service, and a deep-seated desire to contribute positively to society, both locally and globally.

Joshua D. Faumuina

Joshua D. Faumuina is a second-generation Pacific Islander of Samoan ancestry completing a juris doctor degree at the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Joshua's career at the University of Hawai'i started a decade ago as a STEM major at Kapi'olani Community College where he earned an Associate of Natural Science degree with a focus on engineering. He completed a baccalaureate degree in Classics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa while working full-time mentoring underrepresented minority students pursuing careers in STEM fields at the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges.

Joshua was elected to represent his peers in the Student Bar Association as an officer of the American Bar Association's student chapter at the William S. Richardson School of Law. Joshua guided the student government in submitting testimony to the Board of Regents regarding proposed tuition increases and has remained active in working amicably with law school administration regarding class modalities and other issues impacting student life.

Through his undergraduate research experiences at Kapi'olani Community College and UH Mānoa, Joshua gained an affinity for research projects and engineering competitions with the support of a NASA Space Grant and Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). He has translated his undergraduate research experiences to coordinating several National Science Foundation consortium grants supporting UH Community Colleges campuses, in close collaboration with UH Mānoa and the UH Hilo Islands of Opportunities Alliance. As a first-generation college graduate, Joshua's experiences as a UH student motivate him to give back to public higher education to ensure opportunities are available to students of all backgrounds.

Joshua is a passionate advocate for LGBTQ+ individuals and co-authored a publication with his husband on Japan's marriage equality cases. His scholarly contributions in this publication highlight jurisprudence from the Hawai'i Supreme Court to make important connections between our constitutional protections for sexual minorities to propose legal reform in Japan.

In his spare time, Joshua enjoys playing Dungeons & Dragons with his law school classmates and caring for his two chickens.

S. Janani Lakshmanan

Swarnalakshmi “Janani” Lakshmanan is a third year doctoral candidate in Mathematics at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM), seeking the seat of Student Regent. She is also pursuing a graduate certificate in Ethnomathematics from the College of Education. After earning a masters-in-passing, Janani is currently writing her dissertation, which connects theoretical computer science and mathematical physics to abstract algebra and combinatorics.

Since beginning her studies with the Department of Mathematics, Janani has developed initiatives to enhance the experience of every student served by the department, writing open educational materials, and serving as a graduate teaching assistant and instructor of record of several mathematics courses. She believes in the adage that mathematics is a social enterprise. This motivated her to strengthen her academic community by founding the UHM chapter of the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM). Janani set precedent in her department as a founding member of the Committee for Student Affairs and Representation, established to combat food insecurity, secure easy access to academic resources, and ensure representation of graduate student interests in the department.

Janani received a BS in Mathematics (Summa Cum Laude) at Arizona State University (ASU) in December 2020. There, she discovered her passion for public speaking at events like Ignite, TEDx, and Changemaker Central while also participating in several mentorship programs with the local AWM. As an undergraduate, she took on several institutional responsibilities as an Instructional Aide, marking herself as someone with the interests of her fellow students at heart. Janani earned the opportunity to intern in NASA’s Psyche Inspired program, sharing the excitement, innovation, and scientific and engineering content of NASA’s Psyche mission with the public in new ways through artistic and creative works. Janani earned the Dean’s Medal upon her graduation, the highest honor awarded to a student in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

For twenty years, Janani has trained in the classical Indian dance form of Bharatanatyam under her guru, Smt. Nita Mallya. She completed her professional stage debut, her Arangetram, in India in December 2016. She is a student/instructor with Sampradaya Dance of India, and has been an active member in collegiate Indian classical art groups (Emory University, ASU). She has been invited to write, co-direct, and perform at events promoting the welfare of marginalized communities in India such as children living with the impact of disabilities and impoverished cultural practitioners.

Janani was recognized by the Government of India’s cultural arts network, Doordarshan, with a Professional Artist’s Grading in March 2019. Janani frequently collaborates with the UHM Department of Dance, Society for Asian Art of Hawai‘i, Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawai‘i State Art Museum, and local dance studios. Janani is a founding member of Aloha Natyam, a group of Bharatanatyam dancers keen on exchanging knowledge and traditional practice with the community of O‘ahu. She currently teaches Bharatanatyam dance to local children.

Janani is a student affiliate of the East West Center (EWC), and an active participant in the thriving community of Hale Mānoa adjacent to campus. In this role, she has served the community through habitat restoration efforts, environmental cleanups, event organization, and community pantries and gardens. Her experience as a Bharatanatyam dancer fosters cultural exchange at the Exchange, East West Fest, the Pacific Youth Summit, and more. Outside the EWC, Janani is learning to be a respectful guest of the Hawaiian archipelago. She is a student of Kumu Hula Iwalani White, whom she credits as a guide, mentor, and friend.

In her spare time, Janani enjoys social Latin dance, sampling bubble tea shops, and playing with her cat, Willow.