Kamehameha Schools (KS) was founded by the will of Bernice Pauahi Bishop, great-granddaughter and last royal descendant of Kamehameha the Great. Kamehameha School for Boys was the first to be established in 1887 on what are now the grounds of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu on the island of O’ahu. A year later the Preparatory Department, for boys six to twelve years of age, opened in adjacent facilities. The School for Girls opened in 1894 on its own campus nearby.

Between 1930 and 1955, all three schools moved to Kapalama Heights, ma‘uka of the old Bishop Museum campus, which provides a panoramic view of Honolulu from Pearl Harbor to Diamond Head. Today, the 600-acre hillside campus features nearly 70 major buildings, seven miles of road and seven athletic fields.

Nearly 3,200 students, 550 of them boarders from the neighbor islands, are enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 on the Kapalama campus. Another 1,950 children attend kindergarten through grade 11 at our Hawai‘i and Maui campuses. About 1,400 three- and four-year-olds are served in 32 Kamehameha preschools statewide. The combined 6,550 preschool through grade 12 student enrollment make Kamehameha the largest independent school in the United States. KS’ policy on admissions is to give preference to applicants of Hawaiian ancestry to the extent permitted by law.

Coeducational since 1965, the Kamehameha High School (grades 9–12) on O‘ahu is college preparatory. Of the 437 graduates of the Class of 2004, 100% were accepted to two- and four-year colleges nationwide. About 19% actually enrolled in two-year colleges and 78% enrolled in four-year colleges in fall 2004.

Kamehameha Elementary and Middle Schools provide a full range of activities to address all aspects of human potential—verbal, mathematical, musical, spatial, physical, social and personal.

In addition to full-time preschool through grade 12 educational programs, Kamehameha also administers an Extension Services program for non-Kamehameha students statewide and a comprehensive college financial aid and counseling program. Kamehameha graduates and Hawaiian graduates of other secondary schools may apply for $15 million each year.

Kamehameha Schools is the largest private landowner in the state of Hawai‘i. Income generated from its residential, commercial and resort leases, as well as diverse investments, fund the schools’ maintenance and educational services. KS subsidizes a significant portion of the cost to educate every student. Families of students pay a modest tuition to cover the remaining cost, which is $2,170 for a high school day student and $4,040 for boarders. Special financial aid is available to students who demonstrate additional need.

Since its founding more than a century ago, Kamehameha Schools has graduated about 20,500 young men and women—a worthy legacy of a visionary princess.