

A message from the CEO

April 1, 2026

Aloha nō e ka 'ohana Kamehameha,

With deep gratitude for the many hands and hearts that have guided us to this moment, I write to share that Dr. Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu Punihei Lipe has been appointed as the next po'o kula of Ke Kula 'o Kamehameha ma Kapālama.

As we observe the rising of the full moons Akua, Hoku and Māhealani, we are reminded that this is an auspicious time, well-suited for sharing important news with our community. These phases are associated with productivity and abundance and are considered favorable for new beginnings, reflecting growth, collaboration, and opportunity. It is a meaningful time for this announcement.

Punihei's journey in education reflects both deep purpose and lifelong commitment. A graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama, her path began in Hawaiian immersion education at Pūnana Leo o Honolulu and Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Waiiau, grounding her early in 'ike kūpuna. She holds a Ph.D. in Education Administration, a master's degree in Counseling Psychology, and a bachelor's degree in Hawaiian Studies.

A Native Hawaiian leader, Punihei brings more than two decades of leadership within the University of Hawai'i system, serving in roles including director of Hawai'i Papa o Ke Ao and the Native Hawaiian Place of Learning Advancement Office; director of the Institute for Hawaiian Language Research and Translation; and director of UH Mānoa's Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Campus Center.

These experiences have prepared her for this moment. Most notably, they reflect her commitment to the work we hold most important: placing the well-being of our haumāna at the center of all we do; supporting our diverse, world-class faculty, staff, and educational leaders; advancing our distinctive model of Hawaiian culture-based education and E Ola! learner outcomes; humbly leading, operating, communicating and building relationships within a complex educational system; living and inspiring through our culture and faith; and believing in and caring for every one of our haumāna and their 'ohana.

Punihei brings a powerful combination of educational depth, systems leadership, and an unwavering commitment to 'ike Hawai'i, paired with humility, continuous learning, and collaborative spirit to meet the moment ahead. As she steps into the role of po'o kula, I share this reflection from Punihei:

"Much of my work has centered on helping UH realize its potential in shaping the next generation of leaders who reflect being truly of Hawai'i. What is incredibly compelling about this opportunity at Kamehameha is that this recognition of kuleana is already the foundation. The work, therefore, is not one of inception, but of elevation—of taking the commitment to shaping 'ōiwi leadership to its next level."

The selection of Punihei as po‘o kula is the result of an extensive search process that was designed to be rigorous, inclusive, and transparent. Every voice mattered throughout the process, which was guided by a clearly defined evaluation rubric and informed by 1,088 comments from our Kamehameha ‘ohana, including many of our haumāna, kumu, limahana, mākua, alumni, and community members. Their voices, mana‘o, and kōkua strengthened the process and helped shape the path forward.

Mahalo nui to the KSK Po‘o Kula Review Committee and our internal teams for bringing leadership, diverse perspectives, and a strong sense of kuleana carried with pono and dedication, and to our partners at Educators Collaborative for their expertise and integrity. We also extend our deep appreciation to the many exceptional candidates, including the other two finalists, for the time, care, and mana‘o they shared with our community. This search affirmed the extraordinary strength, depth of talent, and leadership that exists across our lāhui.

The role of po‘o kula carries tremendous kuleana—stewarding a kahua of kuleana for haumāna, kumu, and the broader Kapālama community, while guiding a campus whose impact is reflected in the generations of haumāna who serve our lāhui. Punihei brings the experience and grounding to lead with humility, vision, and a deep commitment to the mission of Ke Kula ‘o Kamehameha and the enduring legacy of Ke Ali‘i Pauahi. Rooted in listening and learning, she will build with the campus community on the strong foundation and exceptional teaching and learning already flourishing at Kapālama.

As Punihei prepares to step into this role on June 15, the work ahead will continue to require our collective kōkua. Together, we will advance the learning, growth, and well-being of our haumāna. Please join me in welcoming Punihei into her new role. We look forward to working together in the coming weeks to support a thoughtful and smooth transition.

We also extend our deep mahalo to Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo for her dedicated service as interim po‘o kula and for her leadership during the upcoming transition. We look forward to her continued service to our haumāna and broader community as she returns to her previous role as vice president of Hi‘ialo. We are equally grateful to the Campus Leadership Team and the many members of our school community whose leadership, care, and commitment have made this school year every bit as strong and meaningful as any other.

I mua Kamehameha.

Aloha,

Jack Wong
Chief Executive Officer



Ke Kula ‘o Kamehameha