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# “A Home Away From Home”: Hui O Nani Hawai‘i 60th Annual Lū‘au

Emma Ferguson, Staff Reporter

Seattle U’s Hui O Nani Hawai‘i sold out its 60th Annual Lū‘au, it was hosted for the first time in-person in two years.

The theme for this year’s lū‘au, Kaulana Nā Pua, means “famous are the flowers.” Reflecting this theme, the Campion Ballroom walls were decked out in flowers representative of Hawai‘i, donning the quote “Famous are the flowers; the children of Hawai‘i.”

“The dances are all about being the children of Hawai‘i, carrying on our culture and sharing our stories here at Seattle U with the Seattle U community. Also showing a little bit about who we are, what we do and why we’re so proud to be from Hawai‘i,” Emmalie Payton, a fourth-year strategic communication and media major, said.

Payton is the logistics chair for the lū‘au. The last time that Payton got to experience the event in person was her freshman year, so participating one last time before graduation was special to her.

The event is as much a family event as it is a club event, everybody jumping from table to table to talk to each other and cheering on all the performers. The event was live-streamed over Zoom for any Seattle U community members who couldn’t attend.

“Back home in Hawai‘i, lū‘au is such a big gathering, the extended family comes, it’s a nice way to spend time with your family, tell stories and eat really good food,” Taylon Manuel, a fourth-year psychology major and president of Hui O Nani Hawai‘i, said. “I’m so happy that Seattle U is able to put that on here so we are able to invite other cultural clubs to come and experience Hawaiian culture. I just enjoy seeing everyone’s happy faces as they eat all the food [and] watch all the dances. It just makes me feel at home as we’re so far away from home.”

The dinner featured staple Hawaiian cuisine like kālua pig and laulau for entrées, shoyu poke and poi for sides and haupia and kūlolo for dessert.

As the program began, the blinds were closed and spot lights were turned towards the stage at the front of the room as the crowd murmured excitedly to one another in anticipation for the main events.

A horn called out over the speakers three times before a video was projected up on the screen next to the stage explaining the history and importance of the first dance, the combined kahiko. As the dancers came onto the stage, a cheer rose from the audience, excited to support the dancers.



“As an instructor, [the event] allows me to show off my girls and their talents, and along with our knowledge of hula and our culture,” Ho‘oleia Lenchanko, a first-year environmental science major at Seattle U and one of the hula instructors for the event, said.

There were nine different dance performances including the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior women’s ‘auana, the officers’ hula and the instructor’s ‘auana. All of the dances were accompanied with a brief video introduction to give credit to the song accompaniment and the creators of the choreography, as well as to give greater cultural context behind each performance.

In between each dance were breaks for the guests to continue enjoying their food and company, to play games and to raffle off prizes, such as a \$200 airfare certificate for Hawaiian Airlines.

Each performance received loud cheers from the audience, and by the last performances—like the men’s haka and a more modern hip-hop performance for the graduating students that was accompanied by a video to commemorate all the relationships built over their four years at Seattle U—there was not a dry eye nor a face without a smile.

“I think we really try to make this club a home away from home,” Payton said.

The welcoming atmosphere of the event was felt by all, participants and guests alike.