

The Kona-California Scholarship

Megan Kurohara

Education

Name of High School and GPA: Hilo High School, ~4.06

Name of Prospective University and Major: Stanford University, Bioengineering

Essay

Growing up in a small town has its perks. On a clear night, the view of the Hilo sky is mesmerizing at its least. Yes, the stars are breathtaking, but their hold on me has always extended far beyond beauty. To me, the stars have always represented something mysterious; they have made me fascinated by what might lie within their unknowns.

At a young age, lying on my driveway, staring at the dotted canvas above, I first became a curious person. Throughout my life, Hawaii's nature inspiring environment has only continued to fuel my questioning mind. When I was in the 8th grade, I was assigned my first science fair project. Looking to the news and my surrounding resources, the focus of my project immediately became clear: renewable energy. As an island state, we have always faced the highest gas and electric prices in the nation. However, with such an abundant supply of natural resources, we also have so much potential to harness clean energy. Hawaii's environment inspired me to tackle my first energy related project, which dealt with optimizing the operating conditions of water turbines for generating hydropower. Throughout the years, I have delved into many more projects, feeding my hungry mind, but my focus has always been the same. During my sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school, I have continued to explore renewable energy related projects – delving into wireless power transport and the photobiological production of hydrogen gas for fuel. Living in Hawaii has made me especially aware of the energy crisis the world faces; living in Hawaii has inspired me to fuel my curiosity with purpose.

While I love science and it has opened up amazing doors of opportunity, because of Hawaii's "limited" resources, finding and getting to those doors hasn't always been easy. When I first delved into difficult, technology-based concepts for my projects, I was on a completely different level than when I first started with water turbines. It seemed like living in Hawaii, which is no Silicon Valley, wasn't suited for what I wanted to do. There was no silver platter, no easy answer when it came to designing and conducting research that required technology our island didn't have access to. However, I have always been determined, and though it has been difficult at times, I have learned to make the most of what's available and I have learned to seek out my opportunities. Hawaii has challenged me, and meeting the challenge, I have grown and benefited endlessly.

Next year I will be heading off to California to study at Stanford University. I plan to major in bioengineering with a focus in medicine, and to minor in science, technology, and society. Academically, I hope to take advantage of all that Stanford has to offer, especially through research as an undergrad. Right now I'm really interested in their work with stem cells! Following my years at Stanford, I plan to attend grad school, but it's hard to where that will take me. I'm currently thinking about continuing research, or possibly starting my own company. While in California, being surrounded by the

brilliant, collaborative minds at Stanford, and being centrally located next to the Valley, I know I will be constantly inspired. I'm excited to see where I take the inspirational spirit of innovation will take me.

As I begin my newest chapter, my life is beginning to resemble a star, quite like the stars I used to gaze at from my driveway as a little kid. What lies ahead is both beautiful and mysterious. There are many unknowns in my future, but I am fascinated to see what's in store. Heading off to California, I am beyond excited and slightly nervous, but I know my experiences at home have prepared me well. My curious, but purposeful mind will help me thrive at Stanford, and I'm positive my cravings for knowledge will only increase. As I seek out research, and begin to plan my life post-graduation, I know my ability to be resourceful and go the extra-mile to make things happen will be priceless in my success.