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A Commitment to Service

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A commitment to service

Each day, Mariah Torres '14 reviews her to-do list with a fierce determination to make a difference.

Her list is ambitious – much like her passion – and includes both personal and professional pursuits. As a health education major, she plans a career in global health. As co-chair and a co-founder of the Student Alumni Association (SAA) and Hawaiian Club president, she is committed to changing the nature in which her peers understand the importance of service.

Torres was inspired to spend a semester in Costa Rica, after taking the class Prevention and Control of Disease from Dawn Graff-Haight, professor of health education. There she learned that Americans are isolated from the extreme health challenges people face around the world and that more should be done about it.

"There was poverty like I had never seen before, numerous earthquakes, no hot water and cockroaches everywhere – but I still loved it," said Torres. "It helped me realize I have been blessed with so much. In turn, it only feels natural that I help whoever I can in any way that I can."

Torres' energy is driven by her intense love of life, experiences and people, Graff-Haight said.

"Whatever she ends up doing in her life, she will do it with love, enthusiasm and with results that will make a difference in the lives of people," she added.

Torres has put her commitment to service in action at Linfield by leading the Hawaiian Club and the SAA. She's been active in SAA since her first year, playing a key role bringing visibility to an organization dedicated to helping students to build a lifelong relationship with Linfield and to understand the role that philanthropy plays in supporting their education.

You could say that Torres has served, literally, as SAA's poster child. She's been featured on numerous flyers, invitations and social media posts as well as planned and executed multiple events including Tag Day, Happy Birthday Linfield, Tuition-Free Day and more.

"I give to Linfield because I believe it's our duty to do so," said Torres. "When you are a part of something like Linfield, it's a commitment. It's like saying 'I'm part of the family.' We get a lot from our school, in traditional and intangible ways. We owe it to future students, so they can have that same growth and experience."

Coming from a small community in Hawaii, Torres struggled to adjust at Linfield. Her connection with the tight-knit Hawaiian Club gave her the support system she needed. She honed a commitment to service, met some of her best friends and had an outlet to share her beloved culture. As president this past year, Torres helped others acclimate to Linfield and the mainland by organizing traditional Hawaiian feasts and events.

Torres was one of only 20 students accepted in the Fred Meyer Internship program last summer. As part of her assignment to the safety department, she created an exercise program for Fred Meyer employees to help reduce the risk of injuries in the workplace. That program is now being modified to fit the needs of all Fred Meyer stores and will be put into action sometime this year.

"This experience helped me realize my passion for creating similar types of projects that would benefit much larger populations around the world," she said.

Torres plans to pursue her master's degree and a career as a public health administrator. She dreams of working on global health issues in Africa or Costa Rica.

"When you put everything into your work and strive to make the world a better place, you can't really be disappointed with life," said Torres. "I plan to do just that, make the world a better place and help others find that same passion."



When Mariah Torres '14 walked across the stage to receive her diploma, nearly 30 Hawaiian relatives were there to cheer her accomplishment. During her four years at Linfield, Torres has been instrumental in educating her peers about the importance of service and philanthropy.

– Alyssa Townsend '15