



NEWS ADVISORY
August 22, 2017

Contact: Karin Mackenzie, (808) 956-4051, karinm@hawaii.edu
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Recent English Graduate Becomes Portz Scholar



Brandy Dobson was recently chosen to be a 2017 Portz Scholar by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), and receive the organization's top prize for undergraduate Honors students. Dobson was one of only four scholars selected throughout the country. Adding to this already impressive feat is the fact that this is the second consecutive year that an English student earned the prestigious award (Jonathan Omuro, BA '15, was a 2016 Portz Scholar) *and* each was mentored by the same professor—Dr. Cynthia Franklin!

Dobson will present her winning thesis at the NCHC conference in Atlanta in November. Titled "A Murmur in the Weeds: A Memoir," the work is an intimate and searing portrait of sisterhood and survival.

"I knew I wanted to write my story since I was in high school, but it was always too painful to begin on my own. I studied English to be better equipped to handle the work of expressing my childhood experience someday. In my second semester at Mānoa, I took an autobiography class and wrote some difficult things. My professor, Dr. Franklin, suggested I make it into an honors thesis. I realized then that I didn't have to begin on my own. I'll be forever grateful for the knowledge and genuine care of everyone who walked with me through the process: my mentor, Dr. Franklin; my thesis committee members, professors Shawna Yang-Ryan and Subramanian Shankar; English Program Director, Dr. James Caron; and Dr. Vernadette Gonzalez, Honors Program Director. All these wonderful people gave me invaluable guidance throughout this academic and personal journey."

Dobson's achievement instills pride in all who worked with her. Together, the dynamic team provided a close and ideal partnership between faculty and engaged student.

Originally from the Big Island, this wife and mother of five (and recent UH Mānoa graduate) currently resides in Pearl City where she is starting a group for women to write their own stories of hardship and trauma. Dobson will complete her memoir, but ultimately, she would like to publish children's and young adult books.

About the Portz Scholars Program

The Portz scholars program was named in honor of John and Edythe Portz. Dr. John Portz was the first director of the honors program at the University of Maryland, College Park, and one of the founders of the National Collegiate Honors Council, the professional association of undergraduate honors programs and colleges.

The College of Languages, Linguistics & Literature (one of the four Arts & Sciences colleges) of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa offers a broad curriculum in English, foreign and heritage languages and literatures, second language studies, and linguistics. Its Asia and Pacific focused curricula is unique in the nation and its faculty regularly teaches more than 25 languages.

If you would like to support the college, please visit www.uhfoundation.org/GivetoLLL.

###

