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PRESS RELEASE

Governor Pulaali'i and the Samoan Language Commission Welcomed Stanford Alumnus and Their New Samoan Language Program at Stanford University

UTULEI, American Samoa — Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula and the Office of the Samoan Language Commission welcomed Brandi Atuatasi and her father, Samson Atuatasi, during their visit to the Territory this week. The meeting honored Brandi's efforts to help establish Introductory Samoan Language courses at Stanford University, a first for the prestigious institution.

Brandi Atuatasi, alongside her classmate Ari Pātū, played an instrumental role in advocating for the inclusion of the Samoan language at Stanford. Motivated by a desire to deepen their connection to their culture and identity, the two students worked with the Stanford Language Center to launch Samoan language instruction in 2023. The course was successfully offered over two academic years but was paused this past year due to instructor availability. The University plans to resume the course in the upcoming academic year.

Atuatasi, who was born and raised in San Diego, California, traces her roots to Fagasā and Fagamalo. She graduated this past spring with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a minor in Human Biology. This fall, she will begin her Master of Science in Community Health and Prevention Research at Stanford, with long-term goals of serving Samoan and Pacific Islander communities in health promotion and disease prevention.

During the meeting with Governor Pulaali'i, Atuatasi shared how the Samoan language program at Stanford came to be. Governor Pulaali'i commended her commitment and

vision, noting that efforts like hers are key to keeping the language alive beyond the borders of the islands.

Executive Director of the Samoan Language Commission, Elisapeta Alaimaleata, expressed gratitude for Atuatasi's advocacy and recognized the importance of building academic and cultural bridges with Samoan communities across the United States that is home to over 250,000 Samoans, according to the 2020 Census. She emphasized the urgent need for accessible Samoan language instruction, particularly in California, where the largest population of Samoans resides.

Atuatasi and the Commission also met with Department of Health Director Dr. Saipale Fuimaono to discuss her graduate research interests and explore how her work might benefit American Samoa. Dr. Fuimaono offered his full support for her thesis and praised her dedication to health equity.

Director Alaimaleata also took the opportunity to share upcoming initiatives by the Commission to promote the Samoan language both locally and abroad. She extended an invitation to Atuatasi and others engaged in similar work to collaborate on future efforts.

Established in 2022, the Samoan Language Commission of American Samoa is dedicated to preserving Samoan as a living language and promoting its use alongside English. The Commission oversees outreach, research, policy, and advocacy efforts to strengthen the status and future of the Samoan language.

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