



Desiré DeSoto Named 2019 School Counselor of the Year Finalist by the American School Counselor Association



ALEXANDRIA, VA – Desiré DeSoto, Ph.D., a school counselor at Wai'anae High School in Wai'anae, Hawaii, has been named a 2019 School Counselor of the Year finalist by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). DeSoto, a 2015-2016 First Nations' Futures Fellow, is a graduate of Whitworth University, Chaminade University and Walden University. She has served as a school counselor for 12 years and has been at Wai'anae High School since 1996.

The School Counselor of the Year award honors professionals who devote their careers to advocating for the nation's students and addressing their academic and social/emotional development and college and career readiness needs.

A native of Mākaha, DeSoto has remained dedicated to supporting the unique challenges faced by the families in the community where she was born and raised. Ryan Oshita, Wai'anae High School vice principal, describes DeSoto as a champion for the fight for educational equity and opportunities for minorities, economically disadvantaged, first generation, special education and Native Hawaiian students. DeSoto's determination to help students envision their postsecondary future lead her to spearhead an important college-going partnership. "Desiré realizes that planting seeds of hope for the future encourages students and helps them see that going to college is a real possibility," Oshita said.

DeSoto, an alumnus of Whitworth College, had a critical role in forming Wai'anae to Whitworth 'Auwai, a community partnership with Kamehameha Schools that provides the opportunity for 17 local high school students to attend Whitworth

University on full scholarships including room & board, books, tuition and two round trip flights to and from Whitworth each school year. "What I find most amazing about this project is that it originated from a conversation between a counselor and her student," said Michael Sarmiento, Kamehameha School Regional Project Manager. "Desiré championed the effort and turned a challenge for one of her students into a life changing opportunity for many of her students."

DeSoto's advocacy for her community also expands to the environment surrounding the island. In her spare time, she volunteers with local organizations, teaching ocean activities and the importance of taking care of the ocean waters and natural resources to children with fragile family situations. "Desiré understands and openly demonstrates that not all teaching and learning happens in a classroom," said Ami Akeo, assistant principal for Nānākuli High and Intermediate School.

The School Counselor of the Year finalists were judged based on their ability to create systemic change within the school counseling profession. Through their significant leadership, collaboration and advocacy skills, the School Counselor of the Year finalists achieved increased student success through their comprehensive school counseling programs. DeSoto, along with the additional five School Counselor of the Year finalists, will be in Washington, D.C., Jan. 30–Feb. 1, 2019 where they will be honored and formally recognized at a black-tie gala.

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About the American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) professional organization based in Alexandria, Va. ASCA promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, career planning and social/emotional development to help today's students become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA has a network of 52 state and territory associations and a membership of more than 36,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.