

MAY 2026

# NEWS LETTER

## MESSAGE FROM DR. ELISA THOMPSON



The end of spring semester is bittersweet as it is a time for good-bye and a time to welcome new opportunities. I offer very sincere congratulations to our 2026 Leadership: Student Affairs in Higher Education, MA graduates. I know each of you has worked hard serving students in your current SAHE roles while attending class countless Saturdays, and all the while supporting each other as a cohort. I have been impressed with your dedication to your studies, the students you serve, and each other. I am excited to see your impact on the student affairs profession, and the students you serve. Please stay in touch and keep an eye on your email for messages from the SAHE program.

I welcome our incoming Summer 2026 SAHE program students. On behalf of the faculty, we are excited to begin collaborating with you soon as we prepare you for leadership in a variety of student affairs roles and have fun while doing it. If you have questions as you prepare to start classes in July, please contact me.

For all, I wish you a happy and healthy summer season.

## THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

*SAHE GOES TO JAPAN*

*The 2026 SAHE Cohort Celebration*

*2026 Commencement*

*Student Spotlight: May Edition*

**ALUMNI CORNER**



# SAHE Goes to Japan

SPRING BREAK 2026



## Global Perspectives: SAHE Cohort Explores Higher Education in Japan

Our Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) students recently returned from a transformative study-abroad program in Japan. The immersive itinerary challenged participants to step outside their comfort zones, build international professional networks, and analyze global student services infrastructure.

### Tokyo: Cultural Landmarks & Housing Infrastructure

The cohort kicked off the trip by balancing rapid navigation of urban transit with deep-dive insights into international student housing.

- **Site Visits:** Navigated Shinjuku Gyoen, Meiji Shrine, Harajuku, Shibuya Crossing, Senso-ji Temple, and the Tokyo Skytree.
- **Institutional Focus:** Toured Waseda University's international student residence hall. The visit concluded with a collaborative Q&A featuring staff from Waseda, International Christian, Nihon, Nagoya, and Kagawa universities.

### Nagoya: Academic Exchange

The delegation paused mid-transit between Tokyo and Kyoto to engage in rigorous scholarly dialogue.

- **Institutional Focus:** Conducted a formal research exchange with faculty and graduate students at Nagoya University's Center for the Studies of Higher Education, concluding with a networking dinner.

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# Highlights From the Trip

## Kyoto & Osaka: Heritage and Executive Briefings

The final leg of the journey paired ancient historic preservation with high-level administrative meetings.

- **Site Visits:** Explored Kyoto's iconic Nijo Castle, teamLab Biovortex digital art exhibition, Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion), and Ginkaku-ji (Silver Pavilion).
- **Institutional Focus:** Visited Osaka Gakuin University for a comprehensive campus tour and an executive panel discussion with the Chief Administrative Officer and directors of International Programs, the Career Center, and Recruitment/PR.
- **Alumni Connection:** The group was thrilled to be joined on campus by SAHE alumna Ben Vargas, who currently works nearby in Shiga-ken.



# The 2026 SAHE Celebration

*Celebrating the great people of the cohort!*

**Great moments are lived, and great memories are made every year when we get the opportunity to celebrate the cohort and its awesome individuals! There was a fantastic turnout, with more than 50 people celebrating together.**

## **Award recipients for SAHE graduation 2026**

- **Outstanding Cohort Leader:**  
**Jennifer Newcomb**
- **Ariel Ortega Social Justice Award:**  
**Tylor Teel**
- **Influential Educator:**  
**Homer Wesley**
- **Inspiration in Student Affairs:**  
**Leya Schnitter**
- **Academic Excellence Award:**  
**Maisie Rice**
- **Outstanding Service to the SAHE Program:**  
**Brenda Soto**



# 2026 Commencement

ON MAY 15, 2026, OVER 1,300 STUDENTS  
CROSSED THE STAGE TO RECEIVE A  
COLLEGE DEGREE. WE PROUDLY  
CELEBRATE THE GRADUATION OF OUR  
LATEST COHORT FROM THE MASTER'S IN  
LEADERSHIP IN STUDENT AFFAIRS IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM. THIS  
MILESTONE MARKS THE CULMINATION OF  
EXTENSIVE ACADEMIC STUDY, HANDS-ON  
PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE, AND A DEEP  
PERSEVERANCE TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE  
CAMPUS COMMUNITIES. THESE RECENT  
GRADUATES ARE OFFICIALLY PREPARED  
TO CONTINUE THEIR PERSONAL AND  
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

- DRE GUY
- JUSTICE MENDOZA
- JENNIFER NEWCOMB
- MAISIE RICE
- TYLOR TEEL
- RASHAD WESTRY
- ANNA WILLIAMSON
- SHARLA WINDLE



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# Student Spotlight: May Edition



## Aubrey Empson

**Admissions Specialist Department of Admissions at  
the University of Colorado Colorado Springs**

This edition's Student Spotlight goes to Aubrey Empson! She recently transitioned from a graduate assistant to a full-time position in the admissions department. She has excelled in this department by demonstrating her commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that prospective students are treated with the utmost fairness throughout the admissions process. Help us in congratulating her incredible achievement!

# ALUMNI *Corner*

## Mark Paquette

**Mark Paquette ('21), was recently promoted to Manager of North America Early Talent at ICF, where he's spent the past four years as a senior talent partner managing early-career hiring and university partnerships. ICF is a global consulting and technology services firm that works with public- and private-sector clients to tackle complex challenges in areas like digital modernization, utility services, energy, environment, transportation infrastructure, and health & human services.**



**Mark C. Paquette, Manager - Early Talent Acquisition**

