What motivated you to attend the GTU?

I wanted to lay foundational written works for the study of Hawaiian Catholicism. I grew up in it, but there is no palapala—no written papers outside of old sermons and homilies. I wanted to articulate foundational principles and methods to the approach of Hawaiian Catholic theology.

I found that a lot of young Native Hawaiians were struggling with being Christian or religious of any sort because they felt that religion—especially Christianity—was in conflict with their cultural identity. I asked myself, “What has happened to the narratives we Hawaiians tell ourselves to be more human—more kānaka?” I would look at elders and they didn’t have this problem. This problem was manifesting in younger people.

Did your experience at the GTU influence your decision to go to law school?

When I taught in Hawai‘i, I realized there was a problem with curricula support, financing, materials, and facilities, so I wanted to work through decision-making structures to help alleviate these problems. In my journey to gather intellectual tools, such as science and engineering at MIT and theology and philosophy at GTU, I asked myself, “What’s the other major language that affects society today?” I saw in boardrooms that when a lawyer would say “no” to our proposed solutions to a problem, everyone would acquiesce, and I thought, “Wait a minute. How can we find a solution?”

I currently work in policy, law creation, and analysis. I set out knowing I was not going to work in litigation, because I could go into court and have one transaction, or I could learn how to adjust the system to increase societal well-being and flourishing, as well as to address social injustice. 

Laura Dunn is a third-year GTU doctoral student and a Native Hawaiian.