

# Chinese-English Debating Society 檀香山中西擴論會

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**Mission:** 1) To encourage cultural, literary, and benevolent activities, especially in memory of the organization's founders; 2) to serve as a pre-law club, the members of which debate or carry on society business, in either Chinese or English, under the rules of parliamentary procedure.



*Society officers Dr. Gail G.L. Li, treasurer (seated); and (left to right) Dennis K.K. Ching, incoming treasurer; Frederick S.H. Ching, secretary; and Robert D.M. Au, president*

**History:** The society was formed in 1893 by a group of intellectuals led by Luke Chan (*Lu Can* 陸燦, 1874–1952), a childhood friend of Sun Yat-sen, who came to Hawaii in 1887 and was purportedly the first student of Chinese ancestry to graduate from Punahou School. When Sun Yat-sen founded the revolutionary Hsing Chung Hui (*Xing Zhong Hui* 興中會 Revive China Society; now the Kuo MinTang Society) in Honolulu in 1894, most members of the Chinese-English Debating Society joined that Society as well, and remained some of Sun's most fervent supporters throughout the period he was active in Hawaii. Yap Kwai-fong (*Ye Guifang* 葉桂芳, 1873–1935), a Honolulu activist popularly acclaimed as the “Father of the University of Hawaii,” was also an early president. The Society was not formally incorporated as a non-profit organization under the laws of the Territory of Hawai'i until January 12, 1903.

**Membership:** The Society has a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and a five-member board of directors. In addition, it has approximately 30 members, some of whom now reside on the US mainland or in China.

*Activities* The founders of the Society contributed funds, now held in interest-bearing financial investments, to support three business meetings a year. These are generally held at a restaurant in February, May, and November. They bring members together to discuss Chinese community issues and news, such as who was joining up to serve in the US armed forces during a war or military campaign. In the late 1980s, members the Society pitched in to try to locate the missing 9-year old school student Li Jiezhao, who disappeared while fundraising for a school project. When that effort failed, the Society helped her mother, Li Yanruan, locate and keep suitable employment.



*Association presidents*

Luke Chan, Yap Kwai-fong,  
Lau Tang, Lum Hong Chee  
1975–85 William K. Ho  
1986–99 Frank Y.F. Lee  
1999–00 Edward W.L. Kam  
2000–01 Frank Y.F. Lee  
2001–03 Robert D.M. Au

*Members (front row, seated, left to right) Eugene Yap, Wah Cho Lock, Hing Kai Luke, and Bunny Wong; (standing behind Bunny Wong) Frank Lee; (middle row, standing, left to right) Wai Kong Wong, Man Lee Ching, Edwin Lau, Lum Nip Leong, Frederick Ching, and Willis Yap; (back row, left to right) Samuel Lam, Richard Lum, Robert Au, Howard Luke, Kenneth Chong, Dennis Wong and Ted Ho.*

*(Sources: UCS; Sun Yat-Sen in Hawaii by Yansheng Ma Lum and Raymond Lum; correspondence with Robert Au)*