


LA ROCHE UNIVERSITY
2020 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI CIRCLE AWARD RECIPIENT



Michael Hassett '11, Ph.D.

Budget Analyst
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration (NOAA)

President & Co-Founder
Friends of Tonga, Inc.

Michael Hassett '11, Ph.D. is a budget analyst for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in the Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection. He is responsible for the preparation of budget justifications, budget formulation, strategic planning, trend analysis and a variety of other analysis

work that identifies gaps, services and inefficiencies in service delivery.

Previously Dr. Hassett worked for the Office of Sustainable Fisheries, St. Vincent De Paul of Baltimore and Baltimore Public City Schools. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Kingdom of Tonga, and as an AmeriCorps volunteer for the Wilkinsburg Youth Project, and the Boys and Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania.

“My career has progressed in the sense that I have an increasingly greater impact on providing services to the public,” he said. “Early on most of my roles were front-line services, which entailed working directly with at-risk populations. I now have progressed to working with stakeholders that affect change across entire programs.”

Dr. Hassett is the co-founder and president of Friends of Tonga, a nonprofit organization which supports educational and developmental opportunities in the Kingdom of Tonga while promoting awareness of Tonga, its culture and the challenges it faces.

Within three years of its launch, Friends of Tonga has established an active board of directors and generated over 350 active members. The organization has raised over \$45,000 and has sponsored 17 high school scholarships, generated more than 450 Pen Pal partners, compiled a library of literacy resources for Tongan teachers, supported four groups of Peace Corps Volunteers, and is rebuilding a kindergarten destroyed by a category 4 cyclone.

“Humanity inspires me to volunteer and serve,” Dr. Hassett said. “Service requires putting the needs of others before yourself, and I consistently am inspired when people from different creeds, races, backgrounds or political parties come together to create positive change.”

Dr. Hassett graduated from La Roche with bachelor’s degrees in history and political science. He also holds a master’s degree and doctorate in public policy from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC).

“When I think of La Roche, I have fond feelings for the camaraderie I had with my classmates, the opportunities for personal and professional growth, and the feeling of being safe to make mistakes,” Dr. Hassett said.

