



PRESS RELEASE

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Eight earn Master of Social Work degrees online in continuing University of Guam-University of Hawaii partnership

A continuing partnership between the University of Guam and the University of Hawaii at Manoa has resulted in eight more master's level social workers in Guam's workforce. Seven graduated in May, and one will graduate in December.

The two universities formed a distance education arrangement in 2012 to give UOG Bachelor of Social Work graduates — the highest social work degree offered in Guam — the opportunity to earn their Master of Social Work through UH Manoa online. Aside from an orientation in Hawaii, the students never have to leave Guam or move off island.

“What we all want is more MSW-level social workers who represent the region, and so this is an exciting opportunity for residents of Guam,” said Theresa M. Kreif, faculty member and assistant to the dean at UH Manoa's Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work.

The partnership has produced 20 graduates since 2014.

Social workers assist vulnerable children, families, veterans, homeless individuals, and others to improve their quality of life. The majority of graduates from the program stay and work within the region or continue working for the agencies or organizations they worked for while enrolled in the master's program but in a more administrative capacity.

“I feel it's elevated the profession on Guam, and in Micronesia, to have more master's-prepared social workers,” said Margaret Hattori-Uchima, dean of UOG's School of

Health. “The work they do is really impactful... It’s changing the lives of individuals in need.”

In addition to their online coursework, the students complete a 450-hour internship, which allows them to become more familiar with the social struggles specific to the communities of this region.

Raymond Shinohara, one of this year’s eight graduates, interned with a senator on Guam analyzing policies related to social issues.

“The senator and I went out into the community [and had] an opportunity to see social disparities from a first-hand perspective,” he said.

The students have also interned for the Salvation Army’s Lighthouse Recovery Center, the Guam Veterans Affairs Office, Guam’s Alternative Lifestyle Association (GALA), the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center, the Judiciary of Guam, and the Guam Department of Education.

UH Manoa’s Master of Social Work program also offers students a unique cultural approach they may not receive at an institution in the continental United States.

“We strive to prioritize academic opportunities for indigenous peoples,” Kreif said.

The school is ranked 51st in the country, putting it in the top 19% of social work programs in the United States. The distance education program takes one year to complete.

“This partnership specifically highlights the exceptional capacity of the [Bachelor of Social Work] program here [at UOG] and the quality and exceptional students that they produce,” Kreif said. “It’s our responsibility to be a partner in the Pacific, and so we are just thrilled to have such a deep, rich partnership with [UOG].”

Though this year’s cohort officially graduated in May, they will be recognized at the University of Guam’s virtual commencement ceremony on June 18.

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Photo caption:



The 2020 graduates of the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Master of Social Work distance education program in partnership with the University of Guam. (Back row, from left) Raymond Shinohara, Kelly Unsiog, Rosario Perez, (middle row, from left) Isabella Fagota, Kimberly Graham, Jean Starr, Aurea Tagudin, and (at front) Richille Uncangco.



Theresa Kreif

Photos courtesy of the University of Guam