



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 12, 2020

For more information, contact:

Jonas Macapinlac
Chief Marketing & Communications Officer
University of Guam
Tel: (671) 735-2944
Cell: (671) 787-1010
Email: jmac@triton.uog.edu

Two coral research projects get funding from UOG Sea Grant

Two University of Guam professors have been awarded research grants from the UOG Sea Grant Program to continue critical work on coral restoration and reef recovery on Guam.

Restoration of blue coral

Laurie Raymundo, interim director of the UOG Marine Laboratory and professor of marine biology, and Claire Moreland-Ochoa, a UOG graduate student in biology, were awarded \$39,171 in research funding to examine the restoration potential of the octocoral *Heliopora coerulea*, or blue coral, by documenting its reproductive biology and fragmentation potential.

“I am thrilled to have received this award, particularly since it will support our coral restoration and rehabilitation program for Guam,” Raymundo said.

Predicting stress levels in corals

Additionally, Sarah Lemer, assistant professor of marine invertebrate genomics, was awarded \$39,508 in research funding to develop a simple genetic toolkit to assess and predict stress levels in corals.

The toolkit could help reef managers identify reefs under stress, pinpoint the contributing stressors, and target resilient corals for restorations. Part of the funding will go toward organizing a workshop to train reef managers in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands to use the genetic toolkit.

“Climate change coupled with local stressors, such as increased water pollution or sediment flow, are a major concern for the health of coral reefs in Guam and a challenge for environmental management organizations that seek to protect and preserve these vital marine ecosystems,” Lemer said. “This Sea Grant funding is particularly exciting because it will help me develop a simple genetic toolkit capable of detecting ongoing stress levels in corals and hopefully allow reef managers to take rapid and proactive actions to protect local corals before they bleach.”

Both projects went through an extensive external review process.

Funding through Sea Grant

The grant is available through the UOG Sea Grant Program’s Competitive Research Funding opportunity, which awards between \$10,000 and \$40,000 in federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funds to several one-year research project proposals. The projects must focus on healthy coastal ecosystems and/or environmental literacy and workforce development in Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Freely Associated States.

“Sea Grant is one of the only local entities that provides research funding in a timely and consistent manner with a goal of supporting projects that directly benefit the management of Guam’s natural resources,” Raymundo said.

The National Sea Grant College Program is a federal-university partnership between NOAA and 34 university-based programs in coastal states and territories nationwide to help citizens better understand, conserve, and utilize the nation’s coastal resources.

“We are pleased with the continued success of our UOG Sea Grant team in securing more resources to invest in local research to achieve resilient coastal resources,” said Anita Borja Enriquez, senior vice president and provost at UOG. “Congratulations to Dr. Raymundo, Dr. Lemer, and graduate student Claire Moreland-Ochoa for submitting high-quality research projects that will address some of the leading threats to our island’s coral reefs.”

Research funding opportunity

UOG Sea Grant has opened up its third Competitive Research Funding opportunity. The competition is open to researchers in organizations, agencies, or post-secondary institutions in Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Freely Associated States. Between \$10,000 and \$40,000 in funding per project will be made available to selected proposals. The deadline to submit research proposals is 5 p.m. on Thursday, July 23.

For more information, visit www.uog.edu/seagrant/research or contact UOG Sea Grant Program Leader Fran Castro at 735-5631 or francastro@uog.edu.

###

Photo Captions:



SeaGrant1: (From left) University of Guam faculty Sarah Lemer, assistant professor of marine invertebrate genomics, and Laurie Raymundo, interim director of the UOG Marine Laboratory and professor of marine biology, hold certificates of grants they were awarded from UOG Sea Grant to continue critical research on coral restoration and reef recovery on Guam.



SeaGrant2: (From left) Thomas W. Krise, president of the University of Guam; Laurie Raymundo, interim director of the UOG Marine Laboratory and professor of marine biology; Sarah Lemer, assistant professor of marine invertebrate genomics at UOG; Austin Shelton, director of UOG Sea Grant; and Frances Castro, program leader and research associate for UOG Sea Grant.

Photos courtesy of the University of Guam