



## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **UOG Sea Grant funds two researchers addressing coastal issues**

Two University of Guam professors will embark on critical research funded by the UOG Sea Grant program that will benefit regional fisheries management and watershed restoration efforts.

Associate Professor Peter Houk of the Marine Laboratory and Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering Ujwalkumar Patil were awarded \$67,124 and recognized for their research proposals during an Oct. 10 ceremony at the UOG Sea Grant headquarters.

“These competitive grant awards are a result of the continued success of the UOG Sea Grant program, and this aligns with one of the marquee initiatives in UOG’s new Para Hulo’ Strategic Plan, which is aiming for UOG to be recognized as a research university with extensive and high-quality research and developing island wisdom and sustainability,” said UOG President Thomas W. Krise. “Congratulations to Dr. Houk and Dr. Patil, and I am excited to see the results of their important research work on fisheries and watersheds.”

The research funds will help provide the resources and materials needed for Houk’s and Patil’s projects. Part of the funding will also be used to hire student research assistants, furthering workforce development efforts at the university.

“I am thankful for this Sea Grant funding opportunity that will build a framework to improve fisheries management through Micronesia,” Houk said. “Fisheries are a part of both social and economic livelihoods, and declining fisheries noted in the past threaten food security and social prosperity, especially in the face of climate change. We will be working with partner agencies and scientists across the region to assess a suite of

primary target species, such as unicornfish (*Tataga*), and provide some guidance and recommendations that make sense at a regional level.”

While much of Houk’s research will be ocean-based, Patil and his team will examine how vegetation can reduce land-based pollution into waterways, specifically in areas where landslides occur. This may identify solutions for the protection and restoration of watersheds.

“Growing vegetation along slopes is an environment-friendly and sustainable solution for rehabilitation and maintenance of slope infrastructure,” Patil said. “This funding will help me to quantify the role of native vegetation roots in reinforcing the soil slopes and assist in providing a bioengineering solution to improve the soil conservation practices by reducing the land-based pollution.”

Both projects went through an extensive external review process and were selected for their close alignment with the UOG Sea Grant program’s strategic plan and focus areas, including healthy coastal ecosystems and environmental literacy and workforce development.

Houk and Patil intend to publish their findings upon completion of their research, providing additional resources that can help local planning, managing, and policymaking.

### **Research funding opportunity for 2020**

UOG Sea Grant has also opened up its competitive research funding for its 2020 cycle. The opportunity is open to researchers in post-secondary institutions, organizations, or agencies within Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Freely Associated States. Between \$10,000 and \$40,000 in funding per project will be made available to selected proposals.

For more information, visit [www.uog.edu/seagrant/research](http://www.uog.edu/seagrant/research) or contact UOG Sea Grant Program Leader Fran Castro at 735-5631 or [francastro@uog.edu](mailto:francastro@uog.edu). The deadline to submit research proposals is Nov. 15.

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**Photo captions:**



(From left) Austin Shelton, director, University of Guam Sea Grant; Dalia Hernandez-Ortiz, graduate student and research assistant; Peter Houk, associate professor, UOG Marine Laboratory; Thomas W. Krise, president, UOG; Ujwalkumar Patil, assistant professor, UOG School of Engineering; Meagan Catahay, undergraduate student and research assistant; Anita Borja Enriquez, senior vice president of academic and student affairs, UOG; and Rachael Leon Guerrero, director, Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, UOG.





Associate Professor Peter Houk of the University of Guam Marine Laboratory is one of two awardees of UOG Sea Grant's 2019 competitive research cycle.





University of Guam School of Engineering Assistant Professor Ujwalkumar Patil is one of two awardees of UOG Sea Grant's 2019 competitive research cycle.

*Photos courtesy of University of Guam*

# 2020 University of Guam Sea Grant Competitive Research Funding

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Researchers in universities, colleges, and nonprofit organizations within Micronesia are encouraged to submit a proposal. UOG Sea Grant will award funding between \$10,000 and \$40,000 per project.

## FOCUS AREAS

1. *Healthy coastal ecosystems*
2. *Environmental literacy & workforce development*

**Deadline for proposals: 5:00 p.m. Nov. 15, 2019**

**For more information**



**[www.uog.edu/seagrant/research](http://www.uog.edu/seagrant/research)**

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