

The University of Guam is a growing American institution of higher learning in the Western Pacific. It is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and is presently designated a minority institution by the U.S. Department of Education. UOG serves as the primary institution of higher education for Guam residents, military personnel and dependents, Asian students, and students from the surrounding islands of Micronesia.

The UOG offers the Bachelor of Arts degree in science majors including biology, chemistry, and mathematics. The biology and chemistry programs are designed to prepare students for: 1) graduate work in biology or chemistry, 2) careers in medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy, 3) employment in chemical or biomedical industries, and 4) teaching. Other undergraduate degrees in various disciplines are also available. The Graduate School of UOG offers Master of Science degree programs in the scientific disciplines of biology and environmental sciences as well as other disciplines.

The UOG and CRCH have had a 16-year collaborative research relationship in natural products drug discovery. These two institutions plan to develop their successful research cooperation into a long-term partnership that is mutually beneficial in the area of cancer research, cancer training and career development, and cancer outreach. The two co-investigators charged with heading this ambitious five-year project will be Dr. Harold L. Allen, President of the University of Guam, and Dr. Carl Wilhelm Vogel, Director of the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii.

As an integral part of the UOG/CRCH partnership, a number of pilot studies are being considered for initiation and implementation. The first pilot program to be initiated will be the identification of students for graduate training at both partner institutions, as well as the identification of the first UOG faculty members to work on a research project for three months in the summer at the CRCH. Another proposed pilot study will be a joint project to assess the dietary intake of Guam residents and the development of a culturally appropriate questionnaire for such an assessment. Other potential future joint pilot projects are in the area of ethnobotanicals, and quality of life (QOL) needs of Guam cancer survivors and their families. Given the fact of rich cultural traditions of indigenous population groups in both Hawaii and Guam, there is a significant potential for future pilot studies in the area of complementary and alternative medicine. Another future pilot program could provide access to cancer information among the different communities on Guam and to identify strategies to make such information available. Pilot projects in the areas of tobacco prevention and control as well as risk factors for chronic disease including cancer risk are being considered. Another area of focus will be the Guam Cancer Registry (GCR), where funds from the partnership program will be used to enhance the quality, comparability, and utility of GCR data to support the cancer research efforts of the UOG.

The developing partnership with the University of Guam may also provide for a mechanism to make clinical trials available to cancer patients in Guam with support from the Clinical Trials Unit at the CRCH, thereby enhancing the quality of care and reducing the burden of cancer in Guam.

If the partnership with the UOG is successful, there is the potential to expand these activities in the future to include the two other U.S. territories in the Pacific, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa, and the three compact nations. Such

an expansion could involve the University of Guam in a leadership role in these new activities, particularly with respect to the neighboring Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It could also involve the future partnering with two-year colleges in those territories.

The three unique aspects of the UOG/CRCH partnership are:

1. This is the only partnership where both partners represent minority-serving institutions as the University of Hawaii itself qualifies as a minority-serving institution. Accordingly, the CRCH is currently the only NCI-designated cancer center at a minority-serving institution. Consequently, research into issues of health disparities in minorities and different ethnic groups is already a major focus of the CRCH, and its faculty are very aware of the importance of cultural sensitivity in their approach to cancer research, an explicit goal of the NCI Minority Institution/Cancer Center Partnership program.
2. The CRCH/UOG partnership is the only partnership where the minority population, which is served by the minority institution, represents Americans of Pacific Island ancestry. There is no other university in the continental U.S. where Pacific Islanders make up the majority of the student body. Furthermore, Pacific Islanders represent a relatively small minority group in the U.S. whose needs have not received adequate attention, a problem whose resolution is compounded by the relative geographic remoteness of the U.S. Pacific island territories from the U.S. mainland.
3. There is a scarcity of biomedical scientists and cancer researchers of Pacific Island ancestry on the faculty of U.S. universities making it impossible to locate a qualified individual to serve on the Program Steering Committee for the partnership outside of the UOG and CRCH. It is hoped that the successful implementation of this partnership will positively impact this deficiency in future years.

The MI/CCP planning grant will enable the University of Hawaii CRCH to export its expertise in the areas of prevention, natural products/drug development, tumor registry, nutrition, cancer care, and basic research to faculty at the University of Guam. In this process, it is hoped that a nucleus of researchers and health care providers in Guam can be brought together with the ultimate aim of increasing the cancer research capability at the UOG; improving the health of Guam's Pacific Island residents, and increasing the number of Chamorros and Pacific Islanders with advanced educational degrees and facilitating their involvement in cancer research. It is further anticipated that by means of the partnership grant that the already existing focus at the CRCH on the disproportionate incidence, mortality, and morbidity in the multiethnic population of Hawaii will be expanded to include the minority populations in the Territory of Guam.

For more information on the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii visit its website at www.crch.org.