



PRESS RELEASE

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UOG Sea Grant, Blue Ocean Law launch legal research fellowship

Law students and recent law school graduates interested in local environmental and human rights issues have a new opportunity to gain career experience. The opportunity is under the newly developed UOG Sea Grant Legal Research Fellowship program, a partnership between the University of Guam Sea Grant program and Blue Ocean Law.

The fellowship, lasting from a couple months to one semester, provides legal training in environmental and human rights research, advocacy, and outreach.

This initiative is a significant step for the UOG Sea Grant program as it looks to strengthen its environmental impact by expanding into legal research, according to UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant director Austin Shelton.

“Adding local capacity in environmental law will help our island to better protect and manage our coastal and marine resources,” Shelton said.

[Blue Ocean Law](#) is an international law firm based in Guam specializing in human and indigenous rights, self-determination, and environmental justice in the Pacific.

Blue Ocean Law and Sea Grant’s interests converge in the areas of environmental protection, sustainability, and justice, according to Julian Aguon, the principal and founder of the firm.

“Our team is happy to collaborate on a program that provides both training and mentorship to law students who care about these issues and who wish to one day work in these areas,” he said.

“One of Sea Grant’s goals is to [...] find innovative ways to bring our people back home so they can contribute to the community in their respective fields. One of those fields is law, so Blue Ocean Law is working with Sea Grant in that we’re providing training opportunities to law students from Guam who wish to return to the island and to work in the legal profession,” Aguon added.

The firm had its first UOG Sea Grant Legal Research Fellow, Cheerful Catunao, in 2021. Catunao completed the fellowship and has now entered Guam’s legal workforce full time. Following this success, two new law students have begun their fellowships under the program. Lillian Gill from Harvard Law and Kyra Blas from Yale Law School are working in the areas of environmental law and climate justice at Blue Ocean Law.

“Initiatives like these are a great way to encourage students to contribute to their communities,” Aguon said. “Additionally, it is a way for them to start engaging with novel areas of law. For instance, climate change is a threat multiplier — it is increasingly acting as an accelerant for human rights violations. So it is exciting for them to examine the ways in which the law can meet one of the greatest challenges of our time.”

Shelton said the new partnership also builds upon UOG Sea Grant’s activities related to the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). The fellowship advances Goal 14: Life Below Water and Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

“UOG Sea Grant will continue working with Blue Ocean Law and other partners to build more pathways home for local talent,” Shelton said.

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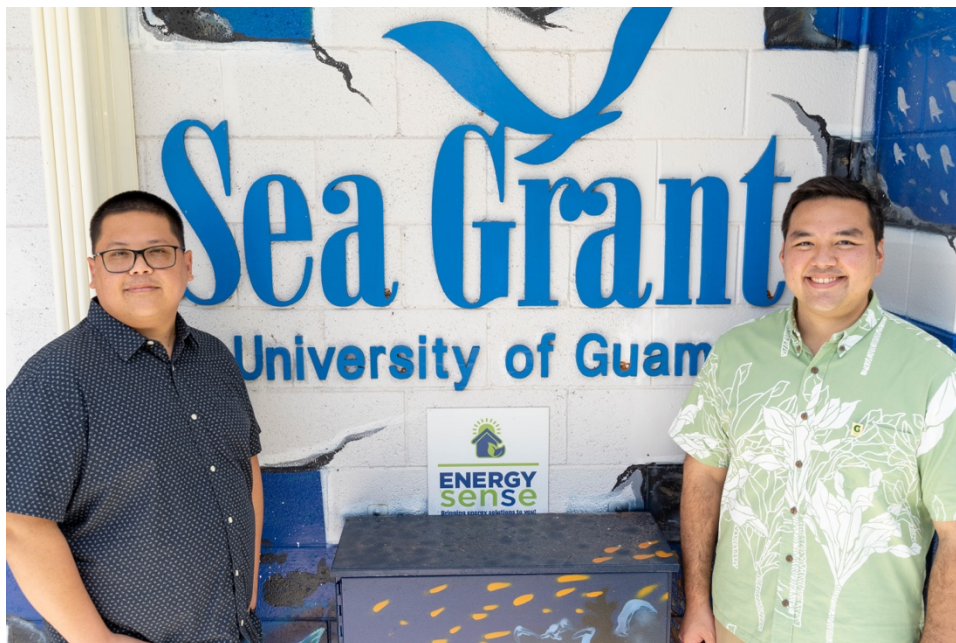


Photo caption:

Julian Aguon, left, principal and founder of Blue Ocean Law, and Austin Shelton, director of the Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant program at the University of Guam, have formed a new legal training and mentorship program for law students and recent law school graduates from the region.

Photo courtesy of University of Guam Sea Grant