



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Leaders champion sustainability at UOG conference**

Over 400 attendees from different parts of the Micronesia region, internationally, and on the island gathered for the opening of the University of Guam 2023 Conference on Island Sustainability on April 12 at the Hyatt Regency Guam.

Leaders from the government, private, and university sectors discussed various efforts to further develop sustainable communities. The conference is themed "Rediscover the Depths of Our Island Abundance." The conference continues through April 15.

Guam's efforts to become sustainable, including producing more food locally and developing a sustainable workforce, have grown tremendously, said Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, co-chair of the conference.

"We want to make sure that our children and our children's children have an island and a place to live that is of great quality, that our waters are clean, that our air is clean that our economy is strong, and that we're providing services to our families and so forth so that's the whole bottom line," the governor said.

“At the end of the day, we will have – and we already do have – an improved quality of life and environment that we can give to our children as their inheritance, moving forward with their lives,” the governor added.

UOG President Thomas W. Krise, who co-chairs the conference, said the conference provides a unique opportunity for leaders from across the region to engage in continuing dialogue and share best practices in sustainability.

Krise hosted the Presidential Summit on Island Sustainability, a landmark event held on April 12 that brought together leaders from universities and colleges in Guam, Palau, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Jeju Island. Krise talked about “a sense of island wisdom, island connectedness, and island consciousness” that will help the islands in the Micronesia region connect with each other toward becoming more sustainable.

“With the increasing urgency of climate change and other global challenges, university leaders play a crucial role in shaping policy and implementing practical solutions,” Krise said.

Guam Community College President Mary Okada, one of the speakers on Tuesday, highlighted what she called “the DNA of sustainability” that has been present at GCC for many years.

Saving energy, in part through the use of solar power on several buildings on campus, is part of GCC's efforts. “So, if we talk about what is important for us in terms of building sustainability into the culture of our campus, you’ll see it in the buildings. You’ll see how we capture rainwater to flush the toilets. You’ll see digital control systems in our air-conditioning,” Okada said.

Director Austin Shelton of the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant programs said the conference will uncover new perspectives.

“We’ve inherited our land from our ancestors, and we are doing what we can today. We are really just borrowing it from our children. So that is the partnership that we are talking about and the actions that we have developed as part of Guam Green Growth, we have tracked and monitored them, and we have a lot to show for the future,” Shelton said.

Maria Eugenia Leon Guerrero, Chairwoman of the Island Sustainability Community Advisory Board discussed the advisory board's role in a press conference on April 11.

"Our goal as the Community Advisory Board is to bring perspectives from all of the islands and industry leaders to contribute to the solution and vision of sustainability for our island and also take the insights that we learn from this community and bring it back to our industries and apply it there," said Maria Leon Guerrero.

This year's keynote speakers are Henk Rogers, an environmental advocate and founder of the Blue Planet Alliance, and Julian Aguon, an international human rights lawyer and founder of Blue Ocean Law.

Check out the conference schedule here: [uog.edu/cis2023/](https://uog.edu/cis2023/)