

Sea Grant Postcard from the Field



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A QUEST to build the future marine science workforce

Hawai'i Sea Grant's QUEST program trains American Samoa Community College students to survey and research coral reefs.



"I want to come back to help out with my community, to give back."

- Fuamai Ativalu Tago, QUEST student



Photos: Kelley Anderson Tagarino | Hawai'i Sea Grant



"It has given me more knowledge on what to pursue in the future"

- Raijeli Toanivere, QUEST student



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There is no better way to learn marine science than to dive right in. In 2011, Hawai'i Sea Grant partnered with American Samoa Community College to create QUEST (Quantitative Underwater Ecological Survey Techniques), a week-long marine ecology course that requires students to immerse themselves in the ocean and in science.

Each year, ten students from American Samoa Community College spend their spring break participating in QUEST, where they learn underwater survey techniques, data analysis and scientific research skills. In the mornings, they dive and conduct surveys of fish, coral, algae, and invertebrates. In the afternoon and evening, they analyze the survey data.

QUEST has inspired 95% of the students who complete the program to continue their education in marine biology or work in a related field. Often, students complete their bachelor's degrees and return to the American Samoa to work in their field. The alumni love the program as much as their new jobs: several alumni have returned to give guest lectures and inspire the next group of QUEST participants.

QUEST has not only trained participants to be competitive candidates for natural resource management positions, as they set out to do, but also filled their students with a love for their local ecosystem.

Image description: Two images, both provided by Kelley Anderson Tagarino, Hawai'i

Sea Grant Marine Science Extension Agent. Left: a group QUEST students posing. Right: two people snorkeling and surveying a coral reef. Quotes from an [article](#) originally printed by NOAA Fisheries

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