

# News Release

*August 3, 2017*

## **SUMMER INTERNS CONDUCT CANCER RESEARCH IN HAWAI'I**

**HONOLULU** – Nineteen high school and undergraduate students conducted cancer research at the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center during the 2017 summer.

"The internship program characterizes the community engagement that is very important to the UH Cancer Center. We are able to reach out to young students across the island and help them get exposed to new research advances and cutting edge biomedical research. These students will become a part of Hawai'i's science and technology workforce," said Dr. Randall Holcombe, UH Cancer Center director.

The interns were chosen through a highly competitive process from public and private schools across the state and the nation. Out of 74 total applications 19 students were selected with an average GPA of 3.77. The internship projects include focuses such as cancer prevention and control measures, cancer epidemiology, bioinformatics, and basic cancer biology.

The internship program provides valuable research experience, exposes young people to possible careers in the life sciences. Past program interns have gone on to earn advanced degrees from top universities before returning to work in Hawai'i as physicians or scientists.

The Cancer Center's program places interns under the guidance of faculty mentors, who help them gain research experience and complete an independent project. Interns also present their research findings to their peers and to Cancer Center faculty through a poster session. The students receive a stipend for their work, which takes place over a two-month span. More than half of the Center's summer interns were underrepresented minority students who are interested in pursuing careers in science.

A 2017 follow-up of 72 previous students showed:

- 73 percent obtained an undergraduate degree in a science field,
- 5 percent completed a medical degree,
- 5 percent had finished graduate school education in a research-oriented field,
- 34 percent are enrolled in an undergraduate science program,
- 13 percent are enrolled in a Master's program and
- 23 percent are enrolled in a Medical School.

### **Lauren Muraoka (Hanalani Schools) attending UH Mānoa**

"As a cancer survivor, I grew up hearing and learning about cancer since before I can remember. I've gotten to meet a lot of other cancer patients, survivors, and families

and anything that contributes to ending and lessening the burden they have to go through is something that I want to be a part of."

"I wanted to experience a research environment first-hand to get a better understanding of what actually happens when planning and executing research. I was also really interested in the fact that a lot of what the Cancer Center is doing is focused on the Pacific, so it's neat to see the community-focused aspect of research as well."

**Phyllis Raquinio (Maui High School) attending UH Mānoa**

"This internship means learning how cancer impacts people around the world and how other health- and non-health related issues play into cancer. It means learning new things about cancer that many people might not know and using that knowledge to fight back against cancer."

**Jasmine Padamada (Kea'au High School) attending UH Mānoa**

"I wanted to be a part of this internship mostly because I wanted to experience how research and medicine work together. I was also interested in applying the skills that I learned during my lab classes at UH Manoa. Ultimately, this internship is a great way for me to take in as much knowledge as I can while contributing to a new discovery."

**Jommel Macaraeg (Waipahu High School)**

"There are numerous individuals who are working around the clock to investigate cancer in terms of prevention, epidemiology, and biology. I want to be a part of these individuals who are trying to understand the mechanisms behind cancer and find a way to fight against it."

**Dylan Combs (Punahou) attending Harvard**

"I am interested in cancer research because I feel there is so much to be discovered, and even more to gain from these discoveries. It is an incredible opportunity to gain research skills and learn new concepts from not only faculty but also other other interns of unique backgrounds."

**2017 Cancer Center Summer Interns**

**Two High School Students**

Jommel Macaraeg (Waipahu High School)

Daven Ruggles (Kalaheo High School)

**Funding**

CURE

CURE

**17 Undergraduate Students**

Larissa Ault (Charter School of San Diego) attending UH Mānoa

Ivy Fernandes (Mid-Pacific Institute) attending Santa Clara University

Megan Ishii (Punahou) attending Scripps College

Jethro Macaraeg (Waipahu High School) attending Creighton

Jasmine Padamada (Kea'au High School) attending UH Mānoa

Phyllis Raquinio (Maui High School) attending UH Mānoa

Nicholas Siu-Li (Hawaii Baptist Academy) attending Santa Clara University

Makana Williams (Punahou) attending Yales

Casie Kubota (St. Andrews) attending UH Mānoa

CURE

CURE

CURE

CURE

CURE

CURE

CURE

CURE

CURE

Meiji

Victoria Mak (Punahou) attending Saint Louis University	Meiji
Lynn Nguyen (Punahou) attending UH Mānoa	Meiji
Mari Ogino (Pearl City) attending UH Mānoa	Meiji
Dylan Combs (Punahou) attending Harvard	Friends
Connor Goo (Punahou) attending USC	Friends
Nicholas Liu ('Iolani) attending University of British Columbia	Friends
Lauren Muraoka (Hanalani) attending UH Mānoa	Friends
Dabe Sobol (Punahou) attending UH Mānoa	Friends

The Center's internship program is supported in part by the National Cancer Institute Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) CURE Supplement, an endowment from the Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Company, and the Friends of the UH Cancer Center.

For photos:

<http://owl.li/k66230e9DQZ>

The University of Hawai'i Cancer Center through its various activities, cancer trial patients and their guests, and other visitors adds more than \$54 million to the O'ahu economy. It is one of only 69 research institutions designated by the National Cancer Institute. Affiliated with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, the Center is dedicated to eliminating cancer through research, education, patient care and community outreach with an emphasis on the unique ethnic, cultural, and environmental characteristics of Hawai'i and the Pacific.

Learn more at [www.uhcancercenter.org](http://www.uhcancercenter.org). Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/UHCancerCenter](http://www.facebook.com/UHCancerCenter). Follow us on Twitter [@UHCancerCenter](https://twitter.com/UHCancerCenter).