



News Release

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Dr. Darren T. Lerner named new director of UH Sea Grant

Following seven years of service as associate director, Dr. Lerner brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position

(Honolulu, HI.) – Dr. Darren T. Lerner has been named the new director of the University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program (UH Sea Grant), and interim director of the UH Water Resources Research Center.

Dr. Lerner takes over the helm from Dr. E. Gordon Grau who served as director for nearly 15 years. Dr. Grau, professor in the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology at the University of Hawai‘i for over 30 years, is stepping down from the directorship to focus his attention on mentoring students and furthering his research on fish endocrinology and environmental physiology at his laboratory at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology, where he has spent the majority of his illustrious career.

During his tenure as UH Sea Grant director, Dr. Grau elevated the program to be one of the top programs in the Sea Grant network which is comprised of 33 programs located in every coastal and Great Lakes state, Puerto Rico, and Guam. His vision and outstanding leadership brought UH Sea Grant to the forefront of issues that are of critical importance to the state and region, and through Sea Grant he has worked tirelessly to transform coastal communities into places that are economically prosperous, socially and culturally inclusive, and have the smallest environmental footprint.

Dr. Lerner noted “It is been an honor to serve under Dr. Grau. He has not only transformed the Sea Grant College Program here in Hawai‘i, but has contributed to the dramatic reshaping of Sea Grant nationally, reflecting the understanding that the problems we face in the ocean and on our coasts are in large part due to our activities on land.”

In his new position, Dr. Lerner will lead and serve the program’s scholarly and creative faculty, staff, and partners in successfully moving UH Sea Grant forward to face the challenges as well as embrace the many opportunities that lie ahead. The unique environments in Hawai‘i and the Pacific region are already changing under the influence of rising ocean levels, coastal erosion, invasive species, increasing land-use and development, pollution, and surging populations, to name a few. Thanks in part to his many years of service at UH Sea Grant, Dr. Lerner is exceptionally well qualified to assist Hawai‘i and the Pacific region in addressing these daunting challenges.

“Dr. Lerner brings the experience and vision that will move our program to the next level,” said Dr. Grau. “He also brings the skills and passion that will allow us to serve the people of Hawai‘i in building a safe and sustainable future for our descendants while thriving within the capacity of our habitats and ecosystems.”

Dr. Lerner earned his bachelor's degree in political science and psychology from the University of Missouri, Columbia; a master's degree in zoology from Oregon State University; and a PhD in organismic and evolutionary biology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Following a USDA sponsored postdoctoral fellowship, Dr. Lerner was appointed as affiliate research faculty at the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, where he conducts a research program focused on the environmental physiology of fishes with an emphasis on the impact of environmental contaminants on fish growth, physiology, and behavior.

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The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program is part of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's prestigious School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology. It supports an innovative program of research, education and extension services directed to the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources of the state, region and nation. Science serving Hawai'i and the Pacific for over 45 years.