



Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship

The University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai‘i Sea Grant) co-hosts a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program with the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Science Center (PI-CASC) to provide promising undergraduates the opportunity to gain valuable research experience, improve their skills in actionable marine, coastal, or climate sciences, and expand their knowledge of environmental issues in Hawai‘i and across the Pacific region. Selected fellows are matched with a mentor--depending on their location, either a researcher or extension agent at the University of Hawai‘i (UH) at Mānoa or Hilo, or at a NOAA research center--whose field of expertise and ongoing research complements to the extent possible the expressed interests of the student, and aligns with Hawai‘i Sea Grant’s mission objectives.

Hawai‘i Sea Grant conducts an innovative program of research, outreach, and education services toward the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources of the state, region, and nation, serving those who live, work, and recreate in coastal communities in Hawai‘i and the Pacific Region. Hawai‘i Sea Grant is one of 34 Sea Grant College Programs nationwide with core funding provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that, as a network, promote unbiased, evidenced-based understanding, conservation, and sustainable use of marine and coastal resources. Funded activities focus in four areas: healthy coastal ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, resilient communities and economies, and environmental literacy and workforce development.

Part of a network of nine regional centers established by the U.S. Department of the Interior, PI-CASC is a partnership between the U.S. Geological Survey and a regionally-based university consortium led by UH Mānoa, with UH Hilo and UOG as members. Research project topics that PI-CASC has funded stretch from the mountains to the sea, from forests to fishponds, from rainfall to streamflow, from shorelines to sea levels. In addition to research, PI-CASC supports building capacity for the future, creating opportunities for students from all ethnic and academic backgrounds to gain important tools for conducting science and knowledge co-production for future research, management, and/or policymaking.

Student Eligibility for SURF

This fellowship is open to any undergraduate currently enrolled at any of the UH system campuses, or currently enrolled at another accredited two- or four-year institution but attended a high school in Hawai‘i or elsewhere in the Pacific. All are encouraged to apply.

Program Details and Expectations for Mentors

- For 2026, the SURF Program will run from June 8 to August 14 (10 weeks).
- Mentors should identify and describe a project (or a defined portion of a larger endeavor) that exposes the fellow to the scientific process and is appropriate for an undergraduate to tackle within 10 weeks.
- Mentors should plan to incorporate the fellow into their lab/work area and commit to supporting the fellow's work and participation for the entire program duration.
- Mentors should arrange for regular interactions with the fellow for problem solving and project supervision, and oversee/approve the final project oral presentation and write-up.
- **Mentors should attend the orientation (June 8) and the final symposium (August 13).**
- Mentors and students will be paired based on shared research science interests. Student applicants are asked to identify two areas of interest from a supplied list of topics relevant to Hawai'i Sea Grant-supported research areas and funded PIs. Mentors will be able to review a recommended pairing before the student is informed. Alternatively, student/mentor pairs can apply in parallel (see *Application Process*, below).
- A stipend will be provided to the fellow in support of 10 weeks of summer research training. Unfortunately, we do not have extra funds to cover additional research-related costs.

Application Process for Mentors

Faculty researchers interested in mentoring a SURF student should write a short description (~300 words) detailing an available project, its specific connections Hawai'i Sea Grant funding priorities, and the components of the project that the student will be working on.

Submit to Dr. Rachel Lentz at rlentz@hawaii.edu by 5 pm January 30, 2026.

If a mentor already has an understanding with a possible fellow for summer work, please indicate in both the mentor and student applications that the pairing is pre-arranged, and we will work to accommodate it, if the project and student are chosen through the application process.

Virtual Information Session

SURF organizers will host a virtual information session at 2 pm on January 20, 2026 to reiterate details of the program and answer questions from prospective students and mentors. [Register for the event](#) to receive zoom connection information.

Contacts & Notification

Please contact Dr. Rachel Lentz at rlentz@hawaii.edu with any questions. Notification of acceptance and student/mentor pairing will be emailed by around mid-April.