



OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTIONS

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## 16 complete 1<sup>st</sup> GCC Regional Marine & Terrestrial Conservation Law Enforcement Academy

Armed with a regional perspective for protection of the environment and to combat human trafficking, the 16 individuals in the inaugural Guam Community College Marine & Terrestrial Conservation Enforcement Academy received their completion certificates on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at the Pacific Star Hotel in Tumon.

Funding for this first-of-its-kind academy was obtained from NOAA, DOI-OIA, US Forest Service – PIPTIEM Program, USAID – Project Ready Program, the FSM Congress, Ernst & Young, and Raymond James, through the Micronesian Conservation Trust.

Both William Kostka, Executive Director of the Micronesian Conservation Trust, and Dr. Ray Somera, GCC Acting President, stressed the importance of the collaboration that made this inaugural academy a success.

“This first course shows us that there is true power in collaboration and that the many partners who participated can work across Micronesia to continue to improve how **we manage our vital resources**,” said Kostka.

“This academy represents the best component of being a part of Micronesia – the part where we collaborate, and share resources and information, because it is in this way that we can successfully cast a much broader law enforcement *talaya*, or net, than if we each just cast individual nets to catch the bad fish,” noted Dr. Somera.

During her remarks as class commander, Carla Laguana, the only female member of the class, noted that **this historic program is important to the region’s survival.**

“In the midst of all this controversy concerning **Guam’s political status** and the loss of our land, conservation is needed now more than ever, and not just exclusively to Guam but to our sister islands - Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap, Palau, and **Republic of Marshall Islands**,” **Laguana said.** “To conserve our agriculture is to preserve our land. To preserve our land is to preserve our heritage. To preserve our heritage is to keep our culture alive.”

The different island members of this first academy are also members of a non-profit organization – the **Pacific Islands Managed & Protected Areas Communities, or PIMPAC**, “**a long term capacity sharing program and social network of site based managers, non-governmental organizations, local communities, federal, state, and territorial agencies, and other stakeholders working together to collectively enhance the effective use and management of managed and protected areas in the Pacific Islands**,” according to [www.pimpac.org](http://www.pimpac.org).

“**Instead of just casting individual ‘lines’ of protection, we have a fishnet-type mentality to protecting the whole region**,” Academy Cadre Lt. Mark Aguon said of the concept of PIMPAC.

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The concept of a regional MTCE academy began nearly eight years ago, according to Jose Munoz, GCC Associate Professor of Criminal Justice & Social Sciences. He said regional officers approached GCC about the concept because no one else had this type of training. Munoz and Donna Cruz, CJSS Professor, developed **the curriculum, “because we knew tourism was going to be a huge economic driver in the region, and we had to develop ways to protect our environment, because it is our livelihood,”** according to Munoz.

The academy ran from July 24 – October 6, 2017, and focused on training law enforcement professionals from around the region in methods of enforcing conservation of wildlife, marine life, and efforts to halt human trafficking.

Suggested photo caption:

The 15 men and class commander Carla Laguana from the inaugural Regional Marine & Terrestrial Conservation Enforcement Academy at Guam Community College pose with their instructors after their completion ceremony Oct. 6 at the Pacific Star Hotel. The regional academy focuses on a shared law **enforcement perspective for protecting Micronesia’s land and ocean resources, and for combatting** human trafficking in the region. Front row (L-R): J. Peter Roberto, GCC Criminal Justice & Social Science Dept. Chair; Lt. Mark Aguon, Cadre; Eugenius Pewtress and Carla Anysia Laguana (class commander), Guam; Francis Lenja, Jr., Republic of the Marshall Islands; Capt. Rinson J. Phillip, Kosrae; Chimres Teresio, Chuuk; Lt. Billy W. Palik, Kosrae; Altrin Ligorio, Pohnpei; and CO1 Chuck Flores, Asst. Cadre. Back Row (L-R): Antonio Mallarme, Jr., Pohnpei; Castro Stanley, Palau; Jerry Palsis, Kosrae; Kindred Sablan, Guam; Tony Limed, Yap; Keper Joel, Pohnpei; David Santiago, Guam; Swenson M. Thomson, Kosrae; and Daniel Conrad Bascon, Guam.

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