



## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**For more information, contact:**

Jonas Macapinlac  
Chief Marketing & Communications Officer  
University of Guam  
Tel: (671) 735-2944  
Cell: (671) 787-1010  
Email: [jmac@triton.uog.edu](mailto:jmac@triton.uog.edu)

### **UOG trains 24 nurse aides for pandemic response**

Twenty four new nursing aides are now assisting in the pandemic response, following a training program through the University of Guam. The university's School of Health last month graduated the first class of its Temporary Nursing Assistant Program, a program developed to help address the critical shortage of nursing assistants during the pandemic.

As of Oct. 22, Health Services of the Pacific, Guam Memorial Hospital, and Guam Regional Medical City reported a combined shortage of 55 certified nursing assistants, or CNAs.

"In this unprecedented state of emergency, the TNAP is not only addressing a shortage of workers, but it's also providing employment and preparing these individuals for rewarding lifelong careers in health care," said Margaret Hattori-Uchima, dean of the School of Health and project director for the Guam/Micronesia Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program, which is partially funding the program through a federal grant along with the governor's office.

The 24 temporary nursing assistants are now working in the community — 12 at Guam Memorial Hospital, 10 at Guam Regional Medical City, and two at Health Services of the Pacific.

"We are truly grateful for UOG's creative and innovative strategy to grow our health care resources via the TNAP," the Guam Memorial Hospital Authority said in a statement on behalf of its board, executive leadership, medical staff, and employees. "This initiative has contributed significantly to the needs of the hospital, particularly in augmenting and

supporting the doctors and nurses in their duties to provide direct patient care services. These CNAs play a very critical role in assisting and fulfilling our mission of delivering excellent care in a safe environment. For this, we are immensely thankful.”

Interest in the program was high — with 200 inquiries and 100 applicants. Another class of approximately 30 students will begin the program soon through Guam Community College.

“This has been a tremendous help, and I would like to thank both UOG and GCC for partnering with the health care community to help during this pandemic,” said Jennifer R. Cruz, chief nursing officer at GRMC.

The program — an accelerated version of the university’s 120-hour Nursing Assistant Training Program that leads to certification as a CNA — requires the trainees to pass a Basic Life Support class and then complete 32 hours of online learning and 16 hours of on-site skills training. The trainees are then tested to demonstrate competency in patient care.

“Patient and staff safety is paramount,” Hattori-Uchima said.

The program is approved by the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners and surpasses the eight hours of online training through the American Health Care Association that many states are following to train temporary nurse aides.

Accepted applicants were also required to have a high school diploma or GED, police and court clearances, and a drug screening.

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**Photo caption:**



Brenda Simmons is one of 24 newly certified temporary nursing assistants through a training program developed by the University of Guam in response to the pandemic. She is now working in the telemetry unit at Guam Regional Medical City, helping to fill a reported shortage of 55 nursing aides on island.

*Photo courtesy of University of Guam*