



PRESS RELEASE

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Two UOG students awarded a U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship

Two University of Guam students have been awarded scholarships through a federal program designed to further their study of foreign languages critical to national security and economic prosperity.

From a nationwide pool of over 4,600 applicants, UOG students Monita Paul and Lourdes Mafnas were selected for the U.S. Department of State's [Critical Language Scholarship \(CLS\)](#). The scholarship program supports the study of 15 critical languages and provides fully funded, group-based intensive language instruction and cultural enrichment experiences. Students typically spend eight to ten weeks studying abroad, although most of this year's CLS institutes will be offered as a virtual program due to the ongoing pandemic.

Mafnas, an environmental science graduate student, said she applied for the program because it looked like an amazing opportunity to explore another culture and visit another country. Regardless of not being able to study abroad this year, Mafnas wanted to continue with the program because she believed it could open doors to other careers and opportunities.

She is studying the Indonesian language remotely through the Universitas Negeri Malang in Malang, Indonesia, one of the program's partner institutes. Mafnas said she chose the language because of her interest in Indonesia's culture, history, people, and environment.

“I am hoping to form a deep and sustained connection with the teachers and students that I have had the amazing opportunity of learning from. All of the students and teachers I have been in contact with have been so kind and willing to help,” Mafnas said. “It is largely because of their support that I have been able to learn so much.”

Biology major Paul enrolled in the program because of her desire to communicate with family members. She is studying the Bangla language remotely this summer through the American Institute of Indian Studies in Kolkata, India.

“I am of Bengali heritage, specifically from my father’s side of the family, but I am unable to read, write, or even speak the language fluently,” Paul said. “I am looking forward to coming out from the program with the ability to communicate with my father’s side of the family. I’m also hoping to use the experience and knowledge I gain for my future career in the medical field.”

The CLS Program is part of a government initiative to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages. The program plays an important role in preparing students for the 21st century’s globalized workforce and national competitiveness.

A description of the CLS Program, including information for applicants, selection criteria, and other details can be found on the program’s [website](#). Students interested in applying for the next cycle can contact UOG’s CLS advisor [Chris Rasmussen](#) at 735-2813 or email rasmussenc@triton.uog.edu.

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2021-monita-paul

UOG biology major Monita Paul is one of the nearly 700 students selected for the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship Program. She will be studying the Bangla language remotely this summer through the American Institute of Indian Studies.



2021-lourdes-mafnas

Lourdes Mafnas, a UOG environmental science graduate student, was selected from a nationwide pool of over 4,600 applicants for the Critical Language Scholarship Program. She is studying the Indonesian language because of her interest in the country's culture, history, people, and environment.

Photos courtesy of the University of Guam