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UH scientist honored among recipients of Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring

HONOLULU – Judith Vergun, director of the Kumu Ola: Source of Knowledge Program in the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, was honored May 16 in Washington, D.C., among recipients of the 2004 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM) — a program supported and administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Each award includes a \$10,000 grant for continued mentoring work.



Vergun was recognized for her role in the Native Americans in Marine and Space Sciences (NAMSS) Program at Oregon State University, which has active mentoring activities and research internships designed to increase participation from members of underrepresented groups, particularly Native Americans.

The Kumu Ola Program at UH Mānoa adapts this proven Oregon model to fit within the unique Pacific context in Hawai'i to increase the number of underrepresented students earning bachelor's degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and who are eligible to continue in graduate schools. Programs help these students obtain degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics-based fields, many of whom go on for graduate study.

PAESMEM honors individuals and institutions that have enhanced the participation of underrepresented groups—such as women, minorities and people with disabilities—in science, mathematics and engineering education at all levels. Since its inception in 1996, the PAESMEM program has recognized 87 individuals and 67 institutions. Each year's awardees add to a widening network of outstanding mentors in the United States, assuring that tomorrow's scientists and engineers will better represent the nation's diverse population. This year, nine individuals and five institutions received the award.

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The 2004 individual awardees are drawn from institutions across the country and represent a variety of professional fields. All are highly regarded mentors and have pioneered innovative and resourceful programs to broaden opportunities in science, math and engineering for underrepresented students at all levels.

The award was presented March 16 at a White House ceremony.

The PAESMEM (Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring) program seeks to identify outstanding mentoring efforts that enhance the participation of groups (i.e., women, minorities, and persons with disabilities) that are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The awardees serve as leaders in the national effort to develop fully the nation's human resources in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The Kumu Ola: Source of Knowledge Program in the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa provides educational opportunities in which students are aware of science, technology, engineering and mathematics coursework and the professions in which the practical application of this knowledge is useful and relevant to their lives. Hands-on learning experiences that integrate traditional and local knowledge with western scientific concepts throughout a network of unbroken pathways and intensive mentoring activities channel students from K-12 to undergraduate institutions and to prepare them for graduate school.

For more information on the Kumu Ola: Source of Knowledge Program, please see the Kumu Ola web site at <http://www.kumuola.org/>

For more information on the presidential mentoring awards program, see: http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=104137

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