



Pacific Island Partnership for Cancer Health Equity (U54) Student Trainee Outcomes 2009-2023

STUDENTS TRAINED 2009-2023



A total of 90 Trainees from the University of Guam and the University of Hawai'i have been trained by the program since 2009, including 73% who identify as women

The Pacific Island Partnership for Cancer Health Equity, a partnership between the University of Guam and the University of Hawai'i's Cancer Center, has been funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) under an U54 cooperative agreement since 2009.



86% of Trainees from Underrepresented Minority Groups (URM) including Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, Black or African American, or Filipino(a).

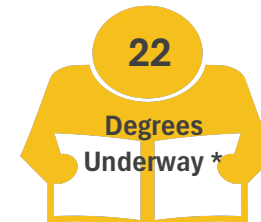
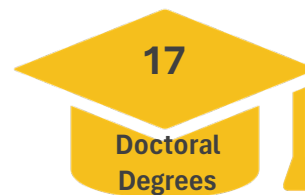
The partnership's Research Education Core aims to provide guidance, support, and opportunities to acquire research skills and experience for Pacific Islander students with a focus on cancer health disparities in the Pacific Island region.



A total of 72 degrees have been earned during the 2009-2023 period.

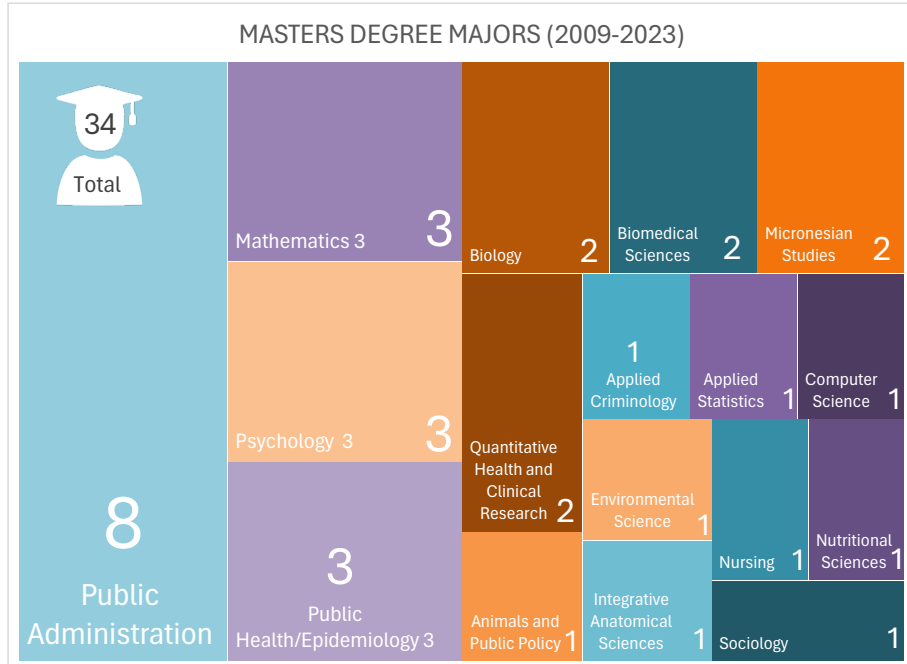
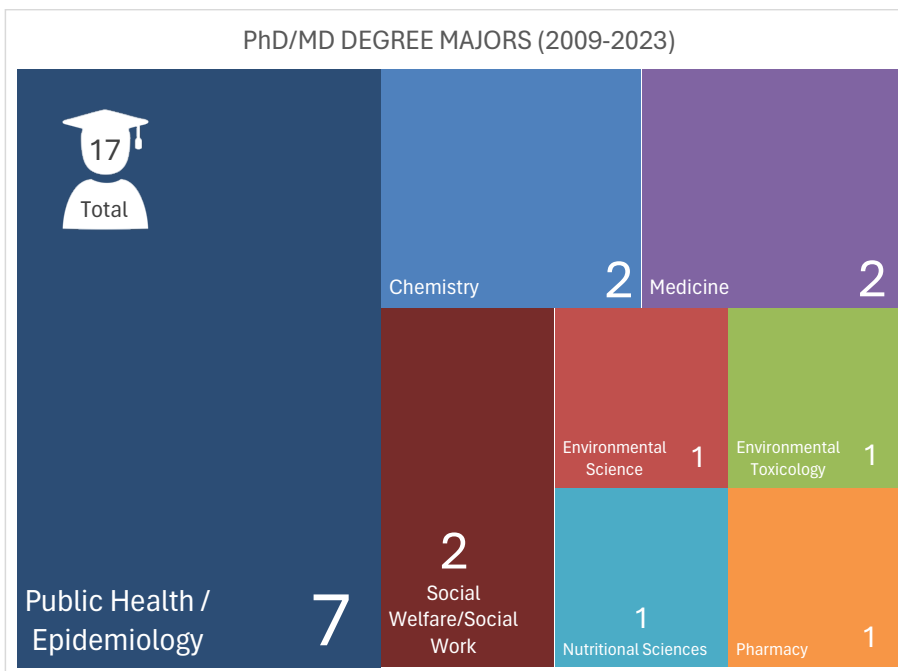
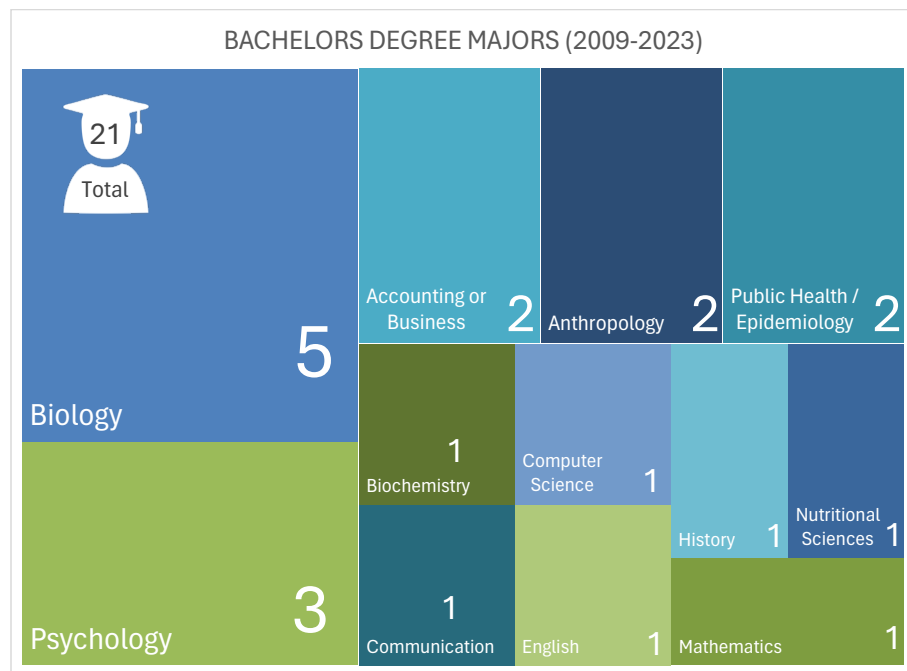
80% of Trainees have graduated with their initially intended degree since joining the program.

DEGREES EARNED 2009-2023



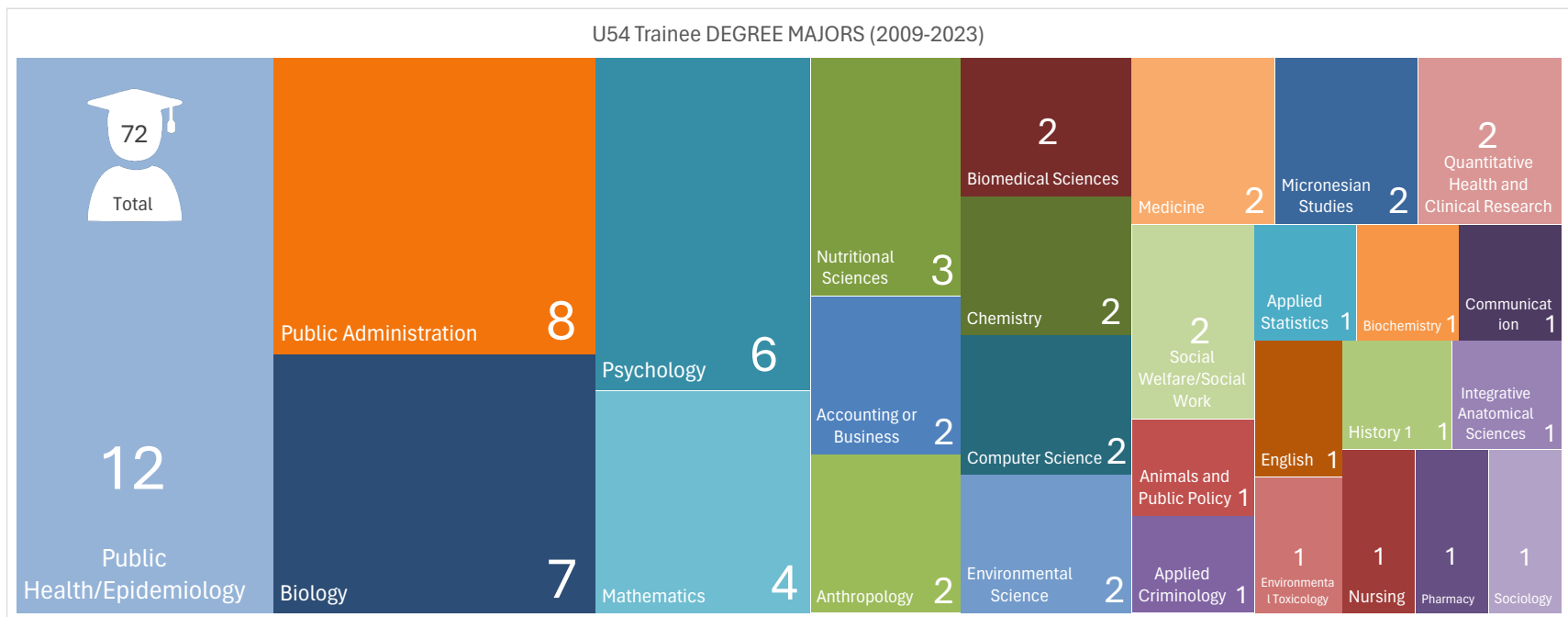
Notes: *Degrees underway include those that previously and currently supported students are still pursuing. ** Stop-outs include degrees that students decided to put on "hold", as well as those that students were not able to complete their intended degrees. PIP.CHE/U54 is sponsored by the National Cancer Institute's Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities under grant numbers U54CA143727 and U54CA143728- Prepared by SBPE 10-28-2023.

U54 PIPCHE Student Trainee Outcomes – MAJORS 2009-2023



Key Findings

- A total of **21 Bachelors degrees** have been earned in the 2009-2023 period
- Most Undergraduate students graduated with a degree in **Biology and Psychology**
- A total of **34 Master degrees** have been earned in the 2009-2023 period
- The majority of Master level degrees are from the field of **Public Administration** (7 of those 8 degrees were for students at the University of Guam)
- A total of **17 PhD degrees** have been earned in the 2009-2023 period
- The majority of PhD degrees earned were in **Public Health or Epidemiology**

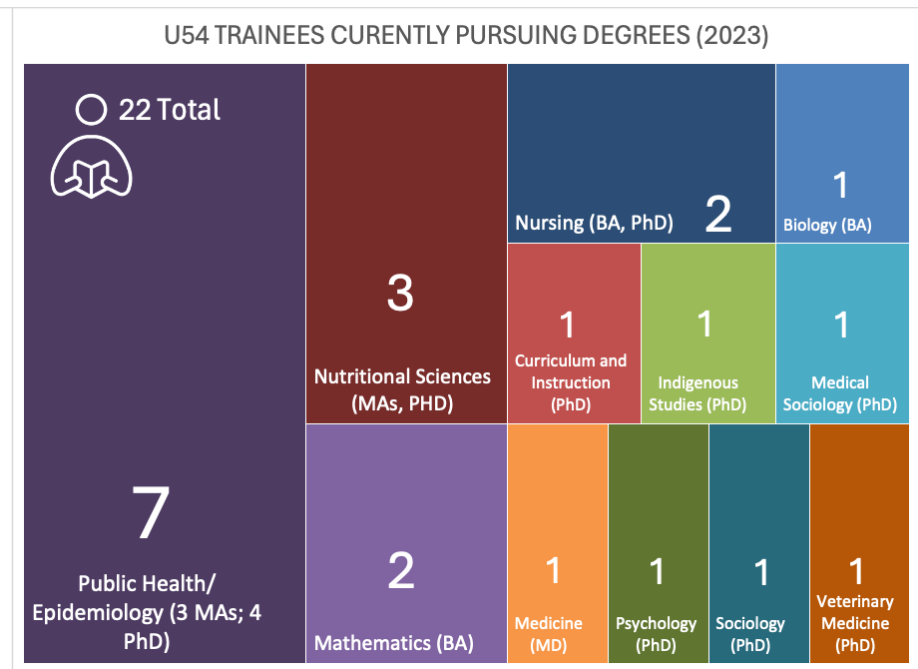


Majors Overall

- A total of **72 Bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees** have been earned by U54 Trainees in the 2009-2023 period
- The majority of U54 Trainee degrees were in **Public Health or Epidemiology** majors, followed by **Public Administration and Biology**

Degrees Ongoing

- A total of 22 U54 Trainees are currently pursuing a degree
- Seven (7) U54 Trainees are currently pursuing degrees in Public Health or Epidemiology (3 Masters and 4 PhD)
- Some U54 Trainees are currently pursuing Masters and PhD degrees in Nutritional Sciences (3), Mathematics (2) as well as Nursing (2)
- Fewer students are pursuing degrees in other disciplines



Student Feedback

An electronic survey was sent out to 78 current and past U54 Trainees in July 2023.¹ A total of 63 Trainees responded to the survey, for an **87% response rate**. In the survey, Trainees were asked about 1) their interactions with their U54 mentor; 2) their recollection of their time in the U54 Program; and 3) anything else they would like to share about their experience in the U54 Program? Below are the summaries of the qualitative responses by trainees.

Mentorship

Trainees were asked about interactions with their U54 mentor, with 48 responding substantively. Those who responded were highly positive. Only one person said they were never formally assigned a mentor, but this person was able to eventually establish a mentoring relationship with a faculty member. Many indicated that their mentors were patient and took the time to explain research in a clear manner. Several indicated that their mentors encouraged further academic pursuits, with two noting that their mentor was the main reason they pursued an advanced degree. Several indicated that their mentor served on their dissertation committee, and several said that they were still in contact with their mentors. A few noted that their mentors gave them the chance to serve as co-authors on papers. One appreciated that their mentor had students present their research findings every six months to their lab, which kept students accountable and provided for constructive criticism. One said their mentor “made me feel like I had a place at the Cancer Center.” Another described their mentor as “a supporter and champion for my pathway to my degree completion and my future research career through our work and future post-doc plans for grants.”

My mentor made me feel like I had a place at the Cancer Center

Recollections about the Program

Participants were asked if they had positive recollections of their time in the U54 Program, with 49 responding substantively. Almost all reported positive experiences. A number of answers paralleled the responses to the previous question about mentorships, with participants appreciating the Program and the professors, and how the Program contributed to their career. As one indicated, “I felt supported by my mentor, peers, and faculty, and my experience in the U54 Program solidified my interest in further pursuing cancer research.” Another said, “My time with the U54 Program influenced the trajectory of where I am today. The program not only gave me work experience, but it also provided me with an invaluable network of researchers that I can reach out to in the future.”

I felt supported by my mentor, peers, and faculty, and my experience in the U54 Program solidified my interest in further pursuing cancer research.

Key experiences that participants recounted included learning data analysis and research methods, understanding health disparities, doing presentations, the student seminars this cycle (Fridays in Hawaii and Saturdays in Guam), collaborating with other students, learning how to write research papers, the interdisciplinary nature of the Program, the sense of community within PIPCHE, opportunities to interview and interact with local community members, and networking and skill-building opportunities.

¹ Of the total 90 U54 Trainees, contact information is unknown or Trainees have asked to be removed from our list for 12 of them.

An area of improvement for the U54 would be to have more connection between research investigators in Honolulu and the communities they serve on Guam and greater Micronesia region.

Several participants offered negative as well as positive feedback. While no one described negative interactions with their mentors in the previous question, a few responses to this question referred to difficulties with mentors, advisors, and other faculty. One wished they had been given more hands-on support, and another regretted not being able to get financial support in their final year of school. One suggested that there was an overemphasis on research related to betel nut behaviors. (It is important to note that the scope of research has expanded over the years since the initial, heavier focus on betel nut). One described a lack of local representation on the faculty. Another suggested increasing recruitment and training of Pacific Islanders from other islands in Micronesia beyond Guam. This participant would have liked to see more connection between researchers in Honolulu and the communities they work with on Guam and the greater Micronesia region.

Additional Feedback

Participants were asked if they wanted to share anything else about their experience in the U54 Program, with 24 responding substantively. Many offered additional positive comments, describing the Program as a *good opportunity* or a *great program*. For example, one described the Program as “a great opportunity for minorities and students from the Pacific Islands.” As noted above, a few indicated that U54 had shaped their career trajectory, e.g. “I am now thinking about doing my dissertation on cancer disparities among Pacific Islanders because of my participation in the U54 program.” Another shared, “Who would have ever thought I would’ve ended up employed by the agency that funded the program that trained me? I’m proud to be one of the very few Pacific Islanders in the Department of Health and Human Services.”

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Other aspects of the Program appreciated by Trainees included the GMaP training and workshops, having a dedicated office to work in, and having local students involved in research. One shared a personal story about how working with cancer patients prepared them for their own experience with cancer later on. A few participants offered negative feedback or **suggestions for improvement** as follows:

- The required Weekly Trainee Seminar was not organized, and expectations were not made clear in advance ²
- It was challenging to have an academic mentor at one university and a research mentor at another university
- Provide more information on job opportunities, U54 programs, internships, and certifications
- Provide more hands-on and clinical training
- Provide paid internships and certifications to help students get jobs in a clinical field
- Program should provide funding for a longer duration to cover the time needed for a Ph.D.
- Provide a support team for Pacific Islanders that come to the University of Hawai‘i
- Provide more opportunities for interaction among trainees outside of the Weekly Trainee Seminar

² One noted that following their participation, the focus of the Program and mentors has strengthened, and more structure is now provided to students.