

Hawai'i CC professor awarded Fulbright for marine science research

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📅 August 11, 2026 👤 [UH News](#)

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Hawai'i CC faculty and students participate in sea turtle research at Punalu'u Beach, Jennifer Sims is third from right.

[Hawai'i Community College](#) Assistant Professor of Biology Jennifer Sims has been awarded a [Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award](#) for the 2026–27 academic year. She will teach and conduct research at the [University of Malta](#).

Sims' research focuses on microplastic pollution, plastic degradation and artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled environmental monitoring, drawing connections between the shared environmental challenges facing island communities in Malta and Hawai'i. Beginning in October 2026, Sims will spend nine months co-teaching biological oceanography and contributing to AI-driven citizen science programs and curriculum to expand undergraduate research opportunities.

"I'm honored to represent Hawai'i Community College through the Fulbright Program and to connect what we're learning here in Hawai'i with global efforts to protect our oceans," said Sims. "Microplastic pollution and ocean health are global challenges, but island communities often experience them first and most deeply. Collaborating

with researchers in Malta gives us a powerful opportunity to share knowledge, compare ecosystems and work toward solutions that will benefit island communities around the world.”

Continued Fulbright success

Sims is the fifth Fulbright Scholar selected from Hawai‘i CC since 2010, continuing the college’s success in the competitive academic exchange program. The college was also recognized as a Top Producing Fulbright Institution in [2023](#) and 2024.

“One of the reasons Hawai‘i CC has had such success with producing Fulbright Scholars is our kauhale (village)-wide commitment to supporting international collaboration,” said Professor Pamela Scheffler, [a two-time awardee](#) and Hawai‘i CC’s Fulbright liaison. “Having a Fulbright liaison on campus means that faculty and staff are supported from before they even make the decision to apply.”



Jennifer Sims

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Fulbright Scholar awards for the 2027–28 academic year are [open for applications](#) until September 15, 2026, and the award cycle for the 2028–29 academic year will open in February 2027.

—By Katie Young Yamanaka

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