Mission: The Institute dedicates itself to educational, clinical, and professional excellence, fostering the development of competent and skillful Oriental Medical practitioners, and promoting acupuncture and Oriental Medicine in the local and global communities.

Graduates will understand the principles, philosophies, and methods of Oriental Medicine, and be experienced in providing health care services to the community; be knowledgeable about Biomedicine, and other healing arts, and able to make informed and appropriate referrals; and meet educational requirements to qualify for both National Board Certification and professional licensing in the State of Hawaii.

The Institute will strive to advance the faculty’s knowledge and skills, thereby creating leaders in the field.

The administrative staff will be committed to the stability and advancement of the Institute, while serving its members.
History: The Institute of Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ICAOM) was founded in 1996 by a group of practitioners who wanted to provide a more mainstream model of education for Oriental Medicine than was available in Honolulu. The founders are Drs. Leanne Chee, Wai Hoa Low, Catherine Low, and Jon Young (deceased).

ICAOM operates as a for-profit corporation in the state of Hawaii, with Governing and Advisory Boards. Its acupuncture program was approved by the Hawaii State Board of Acupuncture in July, 1997, licensed to operate by the Hawaii Department of Education in August, 1997, and approved by the State Office of the State Postsecondary Education Commission in 2003.

The Master of Science in Oriental Medicine has been accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), the recognized accrediting agency for the approval of programs training practitioners of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. ACAOM is located at 7501 Greenway Center Drive, Suite 820; Greenbelt, MD 20770; telephone (301) 313-0855; fax (301) 313-0912.

Activities The Institute of Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine has created a comprehensive professional degree program that leads to a Master of Science in Oriental Medicine (M.S.O.M.). The curriculum, totaling 2,715 hours of academic and clinical education, is designed to provide our students with a strong foundation in the theory, philosophy, and practice of Oriental Medicine, the various treatment modalities employed, as well as the Biomedical model of health and disease. As students progress through the curriculum, they gradually move away from the didactic courses, and move towards a more practical, clinical emphasis, as they prepare to become independent practitioners in the rapidly growing field of health care. The estimated cost of the entire 36-month (four academic year) program, including tuition, books, supplies, malpractice insurance for the internship program, and other fees, is $29,000. This is not an exact figure, and the costs for part-time students may be higher.

The academic portion of the program is composed of four sections, totaling 1,815 hours (121 credits) of intensive study. These sections are Theoretical Foundations, Acupuncture, Herbal Medicine, and Biomedicine. Altogether, these four areas of study give our students a broad base of understanding as they transition into the clinical program.
Theoretical Foundations covers basic and advanced theory, Qi Gong, diagnosis, differentiation of disease, treatment strategies, ethics, practice management, and patient counseling. This section is composed of 360 hours, and is designed so that each class builds upon the next.

The Acupuncture section totals 450 hours, and is designed to help students develop a deep knowledge and understanding of this ancient art that has become the hallmark of Oriental Medicine in the United States. It begins with point location and channel theory, clean needle techniques, and the functions and indications of all the regular meridian points, as well as many Extra or New points. Students then learn various techniques of acupuncture and moxibustion, as well as classical combinations of points. Completing this section is a study of Tui Na (bodywork or manual therapy), and Ear, Scalp and Hand acupuncture. After completing this section, our students will have a solid foundation that will serve them well as they complete the clinical internship program and begin the transition into their chosen profession.

The next section is in Chinese herbal medicine and totals 450 hours, which includes 45 hours of Herb Laboratory experience. Once again, the reason behind the design of this section is for each class to build upon the foundation of the previous classes. The introduction to herbology includes a study of botany as well, thus aiding the student in later classes, where they will need to be familiar with Western scientific classifications of various plant components. The study of nutrition also falls under this section, since herbs and foods are really part of the same continuum. The materia medica is studied over three classes, and involves a detailed study of

Dr. Catherine Low, ICAOM clinical director, instructs acupuncture interns on how to perform a treatment.
over 300 different herbs, and 150 formulas. From there, students learn the use of Chinese Patent Formulas as an introduction into the creation and use of herbal formulas, which is the focus of the final academic portion of the herbal program. Finally, an herbal clinic allows students to practice what they have learned in a supervised setting, and become even more familiar with the herbs in the dispensary.

The Biomedical section of the program is composed of 555 hours, and broadens the students’ understanding of the structure and function of the human body, as well as aids in the integration of Oriental Medicine and Biomedicine. As we enter the new millennium, it likely that practitioners of Oriental Medicine will be working side by side with doctors of Biomedicine, and it will be important that we develop the ability to communicate between these two disciplines. This section begins with a study of Biomedical concepts and terminology in order to prepare students for other classes they will need to take, including biology, anatomy and physiology, and pharmacology. Building on this knowledge is a study of Biomedical pathology and diagnosis, with an emphasis on the clinical application of all they have learned.

The final and perhaps most important part of the education at the Institute is the Clinical Internship. It is here that all the knowledge students have accumulated is brought together, ultimately leading to a greater understanding of what it means to be a healer. The 900-hour (30 credits) clinical program is composed of the clinic observation stage, the clinical internship, and the herbal clinic and dispensary. During clinical observation, which begins in the first year of study, students will become familiar with the workings of the student clinic, the importance of proper documentation, and observe the students of upper classes assess, diagnose, and treat patients. The Clinical Internship is where students gain valuable experience in all of the skills needed in the practice of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Our busy student clinic offers quality, low-cost health care to the community, under the supervision of some of the finest practitioners in the state of Hawaii.

Additionally, the Institute is continually working to improve the quality of the program, and is currently working on a schedule of elective courses, workshops, seminars, and intensive training. Theses courses will offer students the opportunity for further study in areas that they choose, depending on their personal interests, the desire to specialize in an particular area, interest in learning from experts in the field, or just the wish to enhance their overall education.

Staff & students
The Institute has an average of 20-25 students and 9 faculty members. There are also 5 fulltime administrative positions.

Association presidents

Sources: Hawaii Department of Commerce website, ICAOM website, and correspondence with Dr. Wai Hoa Low.