VOLUME 13 NO. 2
DECEMBER 2025

GRAD NEWSLINE

Official Newsletter of the Graduate Education & Distance Education Programs Office, Visayas State University, Baybay City, Leyte





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UC EXECUTIVE BOARD GATHERS IN TOKYO, WELCOMES NEW MEMBER, AND SETS FUTURE AGENDA

The Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) marked another milestone as it successfully held its 38th Executive Board Meeting on 18–20 November 2025 at the Tokyo University of Agriculture (Tokyo NODAI) in Japan. The three-day gathering brought together 26 Executive Board members and 11 university officials and staff representing 15 institutions from Southeast Asia, Japan, Taiwan, and Canada—making it a truly diverse and collaborative event.

The meeting opened with a warm message from Prof. Dr. Fumio Eguchi, President of Tokyo NODAI, who welcomed all delegates to the host university He later joined the top official of UC member

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Editor's Note

Warm regards to our readers!

July–December 2025 Issue

The past months have marked a period of sustained academic progress and shared achievement for the Graduate Education community of Visayas State University. We are pleased to present this issue of the **GRAD Newsletter**, which both celebrates institutional milestones and documents the scholarly engagements of our graduate students, faculty, and academic partners.

A major highlight of this issue is VSU's distinction as the **only institution in the region with 100% of its graduate degree programs granted Certificates of Program Compliance (COPC) by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)**, following the approval of the **Master of Science in Chemistry** and the **Master of Science in Plant Breeding**. This milestone affirms the university's commitment to quality, relevance, and academic excellence in graduate education, while responding to national priorities and the evolving demands of advanced scholarship and professional practice.

This issue also features the active participation of our graduate students and faculty in international and regional academic platforms, including the I**nternational Summer School in Japan** and the **7th UC Faculty Forum** on **Agriculture** and **Sustainability.** These engagements reflect both the growing visibility of VSU in global academic spaces and the university's emphasis on research collaboration, interdisciplinary dialogue, and sustainability-driven innovation.

Behind these achievements are the collective efforts of our graduate students, faculty mentors, academic leaders, institutional partners, and support staff. Their dedication to rigorous inquiry, mentorship, and collaboration continues to strengthen VSU's academic culture and societal contribution.

As you read this issue, we hope you find both inspiration and affirmation in the achievements and scholarly journeys of your fellow Viscans. May these stories encourage continued inquiry, innovation, and engagement as we collectively advance the mission of graduate education at Visayas State University.

"Celebrating milestones while advancing scholarship—graduate education at Visayas State University in action."

Dr. Marilyn M. Belarmino
Editor-in-Chief



to discuss potential areas for deeper collaboration, reaffirming Tokyo NODAI's commitment to strengthening academic and research partnerships within the consortium. This year's Executive Board Meeting gathered representatives from long-standing regular UC members:

- Indonesia: Universitas Gadjah Mada, IPB University, and Universitas Brawijaya
- Malaysia: Universiti Putra Malaysia Thailand: Kasetsart University and Maejo University
- Philippines: Central Luzon State University, Visayas State University, and University of the Philippines Los Baños



Photo courtesy: SEARCA facebook page

Associate members Tokyo NODAI and National Taiwan University, along with affiliate members Dalhousie University and the University of Alberta from Canada, were also in full attendance. One of the most notable moments of the meeting was the elevation of Central Mindanao University, previously an affiliate member, to regular member status—a significant recognition of the university's active involvement and growing contributions to the consortium.

Another highlight was the renewal of the memorandum of understanding between SEARCA and National Taiwan University, reinforcing years of close collaboration in advancing graduate education and joint research initiatives.

Representing SEARCA as the UC Secretariat were:

- Dr. Mercedita Sombilla, Center Director and UC Chief Executive Officer
- Dr. Nur Azura binti Adam, Deputy Director for Programs and UC Executive Officer
- Dr. Maria Cristeta Cuaresma, Senior Program Head for Education and Collective Learning Department and UC Coordinator

Throughout the meeting, members shared institutional updates and discussed progress on key projects, including the ERASMUS+ Postgraduate Micro-Credential on Food Security and Climate Change (PMC FSCC). The Board also reviewed the membership application of Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) and began preparations for the consortium's 2026 budget and major activities, such as summer schools, faculty and graduate forums, and future Executive Board Meetings. With renewed partnerships, new member institutions, and shared plans for the coming year, the 38th UC Executive Board Meeting underscored the consortium's continued commitment to strengthening graduate education and collaborative research across the region.

A CELEBRATION OF RESILIENCE: HONORING OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS

On July 19, 2025, the RDE Hall was filled with a sense of pride and accomplishment as the Graduate Education Office hosted a special Tribute Party for our graduate students. The event served as more than just a social gathering; it was a collective moment to pause and appreciate the arduous journey undertaken by our scholars. Faculty and administration came together to celebrate achievements earned through long nights, countless revisions, and the unwavering perseverance that defines the graduate school experience.



As students prepared to close this meaningful chapter and step into the next, the tribute offered a heartfelt "thank you" for their passion and determination. It was an afternoon dedicated to honoring those who have met obstacles head-on and left an indelible mark on our university. To our graduate students: thank you for letting us celebrate your moment. We are incredibly proud of the milestone you have reached.







BEYOND THE MEDALS: A TESTIMONY OF FAITH AND EXCELLENCE

When the Class of 2025's Top Academic Performer, Jacklyn E . Olaer, M.Sc. in Development Communication , stepped up to the podium, she brought with her more than just medals and certificates. She brought a story woven from faith, perseverance, and purpose.

In a moving testimony, she candidly shared that her academic success was not merely the result of sleepless nights or sheer determination, but a reflection of God's grace guiding her every step. She recalled moments of fear and the heavy weight of expectations—seasons when doubts felt louder than her dreams. Yet, in every struggle, she found her strength by seeking God first.

Eschewing the usual "study hacks" or tips for high grades, she offered her fellow graduates something deeper: a call to character. She reminded the audience that success loses its meaning if it is not rooted in integrity and humility.

Her speech transformed into a celebration of faithfulness and shared journeys, reminding the Class of 2025 that their achievements shine brightest when they reflect a heart grounded in gratitude and a life lived with purpose.

HONORING THE TRIUMPH OF OUR INTERNATIONAL GTA AND FELLOWSHIP GRANTEES

We recently had the distinct privilege of celebrating a remarkable group of individuals whose journeys brought them across borders and through barriers to reach a triumphant milestone. Graduating students: Al Helal, Abu Sayed MS in Tropical Ecology Jashore, Bangladesh Arthur, Bismark MS in Soil Science Accra, Ghana; Maguchu, Percy Charles MS in Tropical Ecology Harare, Zimbabwe, and Siddique, Abu Bakar MS in Tropical Ecology Jashore, Bangladesh, dressed in their academic regalia, the International Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) and Fellowship Program grantees stood together—not just as graduates, but as symbols of global resilience. Each student carried a unique narrative: leaving home to pursue opportunity, adapting to new cultures, and mastering the delicate balance of academic rigor and teaching responsibilities. These scholars enriched our research, brought diverse perspectives to our discussions, and acted as ambassadors of global collaboration. As they step into the next chapter of their lives, we celebrate the journeys that shaped them.



MASTERING THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW: A MORNING OF INSIGHT WITH DR. QUILICOT

The GE Conference Room was abuzz with scholarly energy as graduate students gathered for a highly anticipated lecture titled *"How to Write a Publishable Systematic Review of Literature."* Led by the esteemed Dr. Ana Marquiza Quilicot, the session transformed the conference room into a hub of lively discussion. The room was packed—a clear testament to our students' hunger for research excellence. Dr. Quilicot unpacked the complexities of crafting high-quality reviews, turning a daunting task into an actionable process. Conversations flowed freely as researchers took enthusiastic notes and engaged in the discussion, absorbing insights designed to elevate their work from classroom requirements to publication-ready material. The strong turnout and palpable enthusiasm highlighted the collective commitment of our graduate community to learning and academic growth.





GRADUATE EDUCATION OFFICE WELCOMED NEW COHORT FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-2026

The Graduate Education Office welcomed incoming graduate students for the new academic year through its comprehensive Onboarding Program held on August 14, 2025 at CCE Building. The event brought together newly admitted students from various disciplines and continuing graduate students to help them prepare for the academic journey ahead and to orient them on the services, resources, and support systems available throughout their graduate studies.

The program opened with welcoming remarks from Dr. Rotacio S. Gravoso, VP for Academic Affairs, who emphasized the institution's commitment to academic excellence, research innovation, and holistic student development. The speaker encouraged the new graduate students to embrace the challenges and opportunities of graduate-level learning and highlighted the vital role they would play in contributing to the university's intellectual community.

Throughout the session, representatives from the Graduate Education Office and other key offices provided essential information on enrollment procedures, academic policies, research support, student wellness initiatives, and available scholarships and grants. Participants were also introduced to library services, digital platforms, and administrative processes that would be integral to their graduate experience.

The Onboarding Program concluded with a message of encouragement from Dr. Marilyn M. Belarmino, Graduate Education Office Director, reaffirming its commitment to assist students throughout their academic journey. With renewed motivation and a clearer understanding of the path ahead, the new graduate students left the event ready to begin the academic year with confidence and enthusiasm.

VSU ACHIEVES SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE: TWO NEW GRADUATE PROGRAMS EARN CHED COPC

Visayas State University (VSU) recently marked a significant achievement in its continuous commitment to strengthening graduate education across the region. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Regional Office VIII officially granted the Certificate of Program Compliance (COPC) to VSU for two new, vital graduate programs: the Master of Science in Chemistry and the Master in Management (Professional Track). This compliance took effect beginning Academic Year 2025–2026. This development represented a proud moment for the university, underscoring its successful efforts to expand its academic portfolio and effectively respond to the growing needs of students, industries, and surrounding communities.

With the formal approval of these programs, VSU reaffirmed its dedication to delivering accessible, relevant, and high-quality graduate education not just in Eastern Visayas, but to a wider clientele.

The success was the result of the tireless commitment of a dedicated team of faculty members, administrators, and academic staff. They worked diligently to meet CHED's rigorous standards throughout the process. Their collective efforts—from meticulous curriculum development to exhaustive documentation and external evaluation—highlighted the university's strong institutional culture of excellence, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to academic quality. For VSU, receiving this COPC approval was more than simple institutional recognition.

It unlocked substantial new opportunities for aspiring graduate students, significantly strengthened the institution's overall research capacity, and advanced its promise to nurture future leaders, scientists, and highly competent professionals.

The University Administration extended its deepest congratulations to everyone who invested their time, passion, and expertise into making this milestone possible. This achievement belongs to the entire VSU community and signals an exciting, transformative chapter in the university's academic history.

VSU continues its trajectory of growth, and we proudly celebrated this well-earned success that further elevates the institution's standing.

VSU WELCOMES NEW FOREIGN GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

VSU through the Graduate Education Department, proudly welcomed two talented international scholars who joined the academic community as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) for the 2025–2026 to 2027–2028 academic years.



Ms. Dishani Harshika Kumarasinghe, 27, from Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, arrived at VSU earlier this year to begin her service in the Department of Animal Science. She is currently pursuing her Master of Science in Animal Science. Upon her arrival, Ms. Kumarasinghe expressed that she was "excited to collaborate with students and faculty at VSU and to learn more about tropical animal management practices." Her expertise and enthusiasm have already made a positive impact on both research activities and classroom learning. Also joining the university community is Mr. Rabbat Hasan Nishan, a 25-year-old scholar from Magura, Bangladesh. He arrived at VSU on September 14, 2025, and is pursuing his Master of Science in Tropical Ecology while serving in the Department of Tropical Ecology.



Mr. Nishan earlier shared that he was "looking forward to exploring the unique ecosystems in the Philippines and sharing knowledge with fellow students and researchers." Since his arrival, he has brought fresh perspectives and a strong commitment to research and academic collaboration.



The Graduate Education Department and the entire VSU community continue to extend their warmest welcome to Ms. Kumarasinghe and Mr. Nishan. Their presence not only highlights VSU's expanding global academic engagement but also enriches the university with diverse cultural insights and new avenues for learning and research collaboration. The community looks forward to the meaningful contributions they will continue to make in the coming years.

VSU WELCOMES GRADUATE RESEARCH EXCHANGE STUDENTS FROM BELGIUM

VSU successfully hosted two talented graduate students from Belgium during the First Semester of Academic Year 2025–2026 as part of its international research exchange program. Their participation underscores VSU's firm commitment to fostering global academic partnerships and promoting vital cross-cultural learning.

Ms. Sophie Fiesoli: Research & Academic Enrichment



Ms. Sophie Fiesoli was the first to arrive, joining the VSU community as a Graduate Research Exchange Student. Throughout her stay, Ms. Fiesoli was actively involved in in-depth research activities and collaborated closely with VSU faculty and students, gaining valuable insights into the local academic and cultural environment. Her presence significantly enriched her own academic journey and provided a great boost to the VSU community.



Ms. Hajar Yammi: Focus on Development Sociology

Ms. Hajar Yammi also joined the exchange, spending two months at VSU to participate in the Master of Science in Development Sociology program. During her stay, she engaged in meaningful research projects while fully immersing herself in cultural exchange. Her time at VSU offered a unique opportunity to learn from local scholars, contribute to ongoing research initiatives, and experience the vibrant culture of the Philippines firsthand.

The exchange experiences of both Ms. Fiesoli and Ms. Yammi have broadened their own perspectives and enriched the entire University community by fostering dialogue, shared knowledge, and cultural understanding.

The VSU community warmly welcomed the Belgian scholars and is confident that their time at VSU was academically fulfilling and personally rewarding. Through these impactful international collaborations, VSU continues to strengthen its position as a regional hub for research excellence, global learning, and cultural exchange.



A PROUD DAY FOR VSU: CHED-SIKAP MOA SIGNING

A proud moment for Visayas State University! Our University was proud and honored to participate in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Signing Ceremony at CHED Regional Office VIII, represented by OIC of the President Dr. Glenn Pajares, Graduate Education Director Dr. Marilyn M. Belarmino, and Education Program Specialist, Mr. Mark Joshua S. Quevedo. This exciting partnership under the CHED-SIKAP Program reaffirms VSU's commitment to advancing graduate education and supporting our faculty and staff in their journey toward higher learning and professional growth. By providing scholarship opportunities and fostering academic excellence, this initiative empowers our educators to further their expertise, contribute to meaningful research, and bring enriched knowledge to our students. With this milestone, VSU continues to champion lifelong learning, professional development, and excellence in education.



VSU GRADUATE STUDENTS REPRESENT UNIVERSITY AT INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL IN JAPAN

Two of VSU's promising graduate students, Khristel Nicole L. Banes and Mark Laurence L. Fornis, from the Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Agriculture and Food Science, represented the University at the International Summer School for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September.

The graduate students participated in the intensive program, which was held at Hiroshima University, Japan, from September 8 to 12, 2025. The summer school brought together young scholars and professors from across the globe to explore innovative approaches to sustainability through scientific collaboration and cultural exchange. Accompanying the students was their professor, Dr. Jade Dhapnee Z. Compendio, who is also an alumna of Hiroshima University. Dr. Compendio provided valuable guidance throughout their immersive experience.



Showcasing VSU Research

On the fourth day of the program, Ms. Banes and Mr. Fornis participated in research and poster presentations, effectively showcasing VSU's commitment to scientific excellence and innovation in animal science.

- Ms. Banes presented her study titled: "Evaluation of Egg Yolk from Various Poultry Species as Semen Extenders for Large White Boars."
- Mr. Fornis showcased his research: "Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) Fruit Juice as an Alternative Semen Extender in Domestic Boar (*Sus scrofa domesticus*)."



Engaging in Advanced Research

Throughout the summer school, the students also engaged in hands-on activities, workshops, and lectures in specialized laboratories. They gained exposure to advanced research technologies and sustainable practices under the guidance of Dr. Masahide Nishibori on Animal Genetics and Dr. Masayuki Shimada on Reproductive Biology.

VSU proudly supported its students in these global learning opportunities, confident that their experiences at Hiroshima University will enhance their knowledge, inspire new ideas, and contribute meaningfully to sustainability initiatives and scientific research within the academic community.

VSU MS HORTICULTURE STUDENT REPRESENTS UNIVERSITY IN INDONESIA



John Mark R. Francisco, an MS Horticulture student, represented VSU at the 4th International Summer Course in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (ISCoNREM), which was held at IPB University, Indonesia, from September 7 to 15, 2025. Mr. Francisco earned his place in the program after a rigorous selection process, standing out among the global applicant pool. He was one of only 117 participants worldwide chosen to attend the nine-day course.

The intensive curriculum was themed "Exploring Harmonization in Tropical Ecosystems: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Better Environmental Solutions."



Hands-On Environmental Training

The program provided a comprehensive learning experience, blending theoretical knowledge with practical application. Activities included:

- **Fieldwork and Ecological Excursions:** Hands-on study of tropical ecosystems.
- **Coral Reef Observations:** Direct engagement with marine resource management.
- **Lectures and Workshops:** Focused on innovative solutions to global environmental challenges.
- **Community Engagement:** Participants were immersed in projects exploring the active role of youth in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Prior to the course, Francisco also completed several pre-program assignments, which included a quiz on climate change impacts and the creation of innovative learning materials for children on youth contributions to climate action.

Broadening Perspective and Impact

Francisco viewed the opportunity as a major career milestone. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to broaden my perspective on environmental management while also representing VSU and the Philippines in addressing issues that affect us all," he shared. His participation, which ensures his training contributes to his research and VSU's mission, was strongly supported by SEARCA, VSU, and the VSU Graduate Education Office. This global exposure strengthens VSU's commitment to cultivating scholars capable of delivering sustainable solutions locally and worldwide.

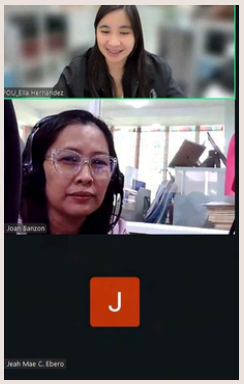


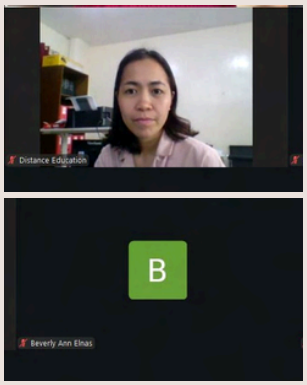
GRADUATE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION TEAM BENCHMARKS WITH UP OPEN UNIVERSITY

The Graduate and Distance Education team recently participated in an enlightening benchmarking session with the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), gaining valuable insights and learning best practices in delivering high-quality distance learning for graduate programs. We were honored to have Asst. Prof. Ria Valerie D. Cabanes as our resource person, alongside Ms. Ella Hernandez from UPOU, who generously shared their expertise and experiences.

Their guidance provided practical strategies and inspiration that will help strengthen our own distance and graduate education initiatives. The session was not just a learning opportunity but also a chance to foster collaboration and exchange ideas with a leading institution in online and distance education.

Our team left with renewed motivation and concrete approaches to further enhance the quality of learning for graduate students, ensuring that education remains accessible, effective, and innovative.







VSU SHINES AT 7TH UC FACULTY FORUM ON AGRICULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

VSU proudly participated in the 7th UC Faculty Forum, which was held on September 24–25, 2025, at Mallberry Suites, Cagayan de Oro City. The event was hosted by Central Mindanao University. This year's forum carried the vital theme, "Building a Sustainable Future: Agriculture in a Green Economy for Global Food Security." The theme emphasized the pivotal role of sustainable agricultural practices in ensuring global food security. Representing VSU with distinction were Dr. Marilyn M. Belarmino, Director of Graduate Education, and Dr. Warren Come, who joined the event alongside VSU alumnus Dr. Angelo Francis Atole.



Showcasing Viscan Expertise

Both Dr. Come and Dr. Atole delivered insightful papers, effectively showcasing the University's excellence in advancing research, innovation, and sustainable practices in agriculture. Their presentations highlighted Viscan expertise and leadership in addressing contemporary challenges in agriculture while contributing to a sustainable and food-secure future.

The two-day forum brought together a diverse group of faculty, researchers, and policymakers from member universities across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines. Participants engaged in rich discussions, knowledge-sharing sessions, and collaborative dialogues, all aimed at fostering partnerships and advancing solutions that promote sustainable agricultural development and a green economy.

This gathering offered a unique platform for cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration, enabling participants to exchange ideas, share best practices, and explore innovative approaches to tackling global agricultural and environmental challenges.

For VSU, the forum reinforced its commitment to research excellence, academic leadership, and international collaboration in the pursuit of sustainable development goals. By actively participating and presenting at such a prestigious international forum, VSU continues to demonstrate its dedication to advancing agriculture, sustainability, and global food security.

The University's involvement also underscores the value of its alumni and faculty in bridging research, policy, and practice to create meaningful impact both locally and globally. The 7th UC Faculty Forum served as a testament to VSU's role as a regional leader in agricultural education and research, nurturing scholars and professionals ready to contribute to a sustainable and food-secure world.

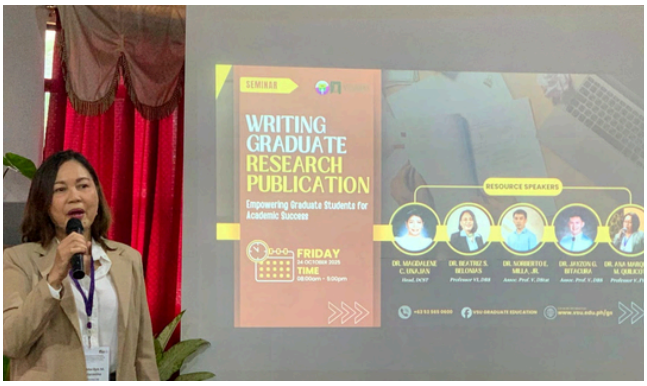
VSU REACHES A NEW MILESTONE WITH APPROVAL OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

VSU proudly celebrates a landmark achievement in its journey toward academic excellence. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has officially approved VSU's application to offer two new graduate programs: the Master of Science in Plant Breeding and the Master in Agricultural Development (Professional Track), beginning Academic Year 2025–2026. This milestone represents the culmination of months of dedication, careful planning, and collaborative effort by the VSU leadership, faculty, and staff. Behind the scenes, countless individuals worked tirelessly to ensure that these programs met the highest standards of quality and relevance in graduate education. Their unwavering commitment reflects the University's shared vision of empowering students, advancing research, and fostering innovation in agriculture and related fields. The new graduate programs are designed to provide students with specialized knowledge and practical skills that will enable them to address current and emerging challenges in agriculture. The Master of Science in Plant Breeding aims to cultivate expertise in plant improvement, genetics, and sustainable crop production, while the Master in Agricultural Development (Professional Track) focuses on developing professionals capable of driving agricultural innovation, policy development, and community-centered

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EMPOWERING GRADUATE STUDENTS: RESEARCH WRITING SEMINAR AT VSU

Excitement filled the 2nd Floor of the CCE Building on October 24, 2025, as graduate students from VSU gathered for a full-day seminar, "Writing for Research Publication in the Age of Artificial Intelligence." The room buzzed with anticipation as students prepared to take their research writing skills to the next level. From the moment the seminar began, participants were actively engaged, listening attentively to insights shared by Dr. Magdalene C. Unajan, Head of the Department of Computer Science and Technology; Dr. Beatriz S. Belonias, Professor IV of the Department of Biological Sciences; Dr. Norberto E. Milla Jr., Associate Professor V of the Department of Statistics; Dr. Jayzon G. Bitacura, Associate Professor V of the Department of Biological Sciences; and Dr. Ana Marquiza M. Quilicot, Professor V of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. These experts guided students through the process of transforming their research into high-quality, publishable work, covering practical strategies, ethical considerations,





and the innovative use of AI tools in academic writing. Throughout the day, students took notes, asked questions, and collaborated in discussions, absorbing tips on structuring research papers, presenting data clearly, and enhancing the clarity, originality, and impact of their work. The seminar was especially designed for 1st-year and graduating graduate students who had not participated in the 2024 session, giving them a unique opportunity to grow academically and professionally. For many participants, the seminar was more than just a learning session—it was an inspiring experience that highlighted the value of sharing research with the broader academic community. By bridging the gap between research and publication, VSU ensures that the knowledge generated within the University can inform, inspire, and influence others locally and globally. As the day drew to a close, students left the venue not only with new tools and strategies for research writing but also with renewed confidence and motivation to pursue scholarly publication. The seminar underscored VSU's ongoing commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and professional growth, preparing graduate students to contribute meaningfully to their fields and strengthening the University's reputation as a center of research and scholarly excellence.

VSU HOSTS WEBINAR ON ADVANCING GRADUATE LEARNING THROUGH ANDRAGOGY AND HEUTAGOGY

Graduate students, faculty, and professionals from VSU came together for an engaging virtual experience during the webinar "Beyond Teaching: Advancing Graduate Learning through Andragogical and Heutagogical Practices", led by Dr. Felecia I. Yeban, a Professor from the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences (FBeSS) of Philippine Normal University; and a Human Rights Catalyst Awardee of the Commission on Human Rights. The event provided a meaningful afternoon of reflection, discussion, and insight into the evolving landscape of graduate education. Participants explored the realities of modern graduate learning, including the challenges of exhaustion, workload, and balancing commitments, while also discovering strategies to foster reflective and self-directed learning. Through Dr. Yeban's guidance, attendees were encouraged to reimagine what it truly means to be a graduate learner in today's dynamic academic world. The webinar emphasized the importance of empowering both educators and students, highlighting how thoughtful teaching approaches and learner-centered practices can transform graduate education. Participants left with practical insights on applying andragogical and heutagogical methods to enhance engagement, motivation, and independent learning. By offering programs like this, VSU continues to strengthen its graduate education community, providing spaces for dialogue, professional development, and innovative thinking. The webinar not only enriched participants' understanding of effective teaching and learning but also inspired them to embrace lifelong learning, self-reflection, and personal growth in their academic journeys. Through these virtual gatherings, VSU reaffirms its commitment to fostering excellence, innovation, and empowerment in graduate education.

initiatives. By offering these programs, VSU not only strengthens its academic portfolio but also reinforces its role as a leading institution in agricultural education and research, both locally and globally. The approval is a testament to the University's ongoing commitment to excellence, innovation, and the holistic development of its graduate students. "This achievement is more than a program approval; it is a reflection of what can be accomplished through vision, perseverance, and teamwork," said VSU officials. "We are proud to open new avenues of learning and research that will benefit our students, our institution, and the broader agricultural community." With these programs in place, VSU looks forward to welcoming the first cohorts of graduate students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to make meaningful contributions to the agricultural sector and beyond. This milestone is not only a cause for celebration but also a reaffirmation of the University's dedication to shaping the next generation of leaders, innovators, and researchers. Visayas State University's latest achievement underscores its commitment to academic excellence, professional growth, and the continuous pursuit of innovation, setting a strong foundation for future successes in graduate education.



VSU SUPPORTS GRADUATE STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION IN ADVANCED NUCLEOTIDE SEQUENCE TRAINING

Through the support of the Visayas State University Graduate Education Office, John Mark Francisco, an MS Horticulture student, participated in the 3-Day Training Workshop on Nucleotide Sequence-Based Identification of Mushrooms held at the Center for Tropical Mushroom Research and Development (CTMRD), Central Luzon State University (CLSU) on October 28–30, 2025. The training brought together participants from various academic and government institutions across the country, focusing on DNA-based approaches for accurate mushroom identification.

During the workshop, Francisco gained both theoretical and hands-on experience in molecular techniques such as DNA extraction, PCR amplification, gel electrophoresis, primer design, BLAST analysis, and phylogenetic tree construction. His participation in this specialized training further enhances his research capacity in mushroom molecular identification, reflecting VSU's continuous commitment to supporting its graduate students in advancing research and innovation in agricultural sciences.

TWO GRADUATE STUDENTS JOIN INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SHORT-TERM PROGRAM 2025 AT CLSU

Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija — Eduard John C. Catalan, a Master of Science in Horticulture student, and Errol Grant O. Bernardo, a Master of Science in Agronomy student recently took part in the International Summer Short-term Program 2025 hosted by Central Luzon State University (CLSU), an intensive international training initiative designed to strengthen global collaboration in sustainable agriculture and emerging technologies.

This program was organized in partnership with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC), brought together international participants eager to deepen their expertise in crop biotechnology, mushroom pharming, and precision and digital agriculture.



CLSU brought together 23 delegates from six Southeast and East Asian countries, representing a total of 11 institutions. Among these were eight members of the University Consortium: IPB University, Universiti Putra Malaysia, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Universitas Brawijaya, Visayas State University, Maejo University, Central Mindanao University, and National Chiayi University.

Two Graduate Students Join International Summer Short-term Program....

They were joined by participants from Universiti Teknologi Brunei, Aurora State College of Technology, and the host, CLSU, creating an engaging and culturally diverse setting aimed at advancing sustainable agricultural innovation. Now in its fifth year, the program continues its mission of promoting academic and research linkages among Southeast Asian institutions. This year, the two participating graduate students each pursued specialized training tracks aligned with their research interests. Mr. Bernardo, enrolled in Track A: Sustainable Crop Biotechnology, learned fundamental molecular biology techniques for plant and bacterial identification under the mentorship of experts at the Department of Agriculture – Crop Biotechnology Center (DA-CBC). Meanwhile, Mr. Catalan joined Track C: Precision and Digital Agriculture, a hands-on training hosted at the Precision and Digital Agriculture Center (PreDict), focusing on data-driven farming technologies and modern agricultural innovations. He was emersed in soil moisture sensor programming, drone mission planning, drone data acquisition and on the robotics, assembled and programmed VEX robotics systems, in the essence of sustainability and efficient management of resources in agriculture.



Mr. Catalan and Mr. Bernardo also immersed themselves in Filipino cultural activities alongside international participants, engaging in bibingka-making, Tinikling dancing, an Arnis demonstration, and a cultural immersion trip to Baler, Aurora. They likewise took part in a University Social Responsibility (USR) initiative, which aims to transfer the knowledge and skills gained from the training center to students, specifically those from Mayapyap National High School in Cabanatuan City and the University Science High School at CLSU. For both delegates, the program provided a meaningful opportunity to represent VSU in international discussions and collaborative efforts focused on agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Additionally, Mr. Catalan and Mr. Bernardo's participation was made possible through the support of the Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Sciences (UC), VSU, and the VSU - Graduate Education Office, ensuring that their experience at CLSU would further expand their knowledge in sustainability, research, and training upon their return. As an affiliate member of the University Consortium, CLSU continues to champion international collaboration by hosting programs that leverage regional expertise and foster a vibrant community of young scientists dedicated to sustainable development.

GRADUATE EDUCATION COUNCIL HOLDS QUARTERLY MEETING



The Graduate Education (GE) Council held its Quarterly Meeting on December 2, 2025, at the GE Conference Room, presided over by Dr. Marilyn M. Belarmino, Director of Graduate Education. Out of the 34 GE Council members, 28 were in attendance, including representatives. The attendees were composed of the following: 5 Deans, 4 Directors, 1 Chancellor, 18 Department Heads.

During the meeting, Dr. Belarmino presented the Director's Report and provided updates on the Graduate Manual of Operations (GPMO), Edition 2025. She also discussed the implications of BOR Resolution No. 13, s. 2024, dated December 3, 2024, which outlined the new VSU organizational structure. Under this restructuring, the position of Dean of the Graduate School was transitioned to Director of Graduate Education, with responsibilities focused primarily on monitoring departments offering graduate degree programs.

Dr. Belarmino further emphasized the need for each department to designate a focal person responsible for data monitoring to ensure efficient coordination and reporting across all graduate programs. Furthermore, during the said meeting, various proposals were discussed and agreed upon, which includes:

- As the host institution for the in-country/in-region German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
- Scholarship for 2027–2029, supporting both MS and PhD programs.
- Inclusion of VSU VITA Campus Latin Honorees in the application for VSU Full Scholarships, provided that the degree program is vertically aligned.
- Revision of Local GTA Qualifications
- Inclusion of the PMC-FSCC 5 Micro-credential Modules into applicable OBE Syllabus
- Joint/Dual Degree Program

VSU GRADUATE EDUCATION EXPLORES MICRO-CREDENTIALING FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

The Graduate Education Unit of VSU hosted a thought-provoking webinar titled "Micro-Credentialing: Advancing Lifelong Learning and Professional Excellence" on 15 December 2025. The event spotlighted innovative learning pathways that strengthen graduate education and support professional development in today's rapidly evolving academic and industry landscapes.



Conducted online, the webinar featured Dr. Dave E. Marcial, Director of the Don Mariano C. Lao Global Studies Center of Silliman University, as the resource speaker. Faculty members from various departments of VSU Main and VSU Tolosa, together with graduate students, actively participated in the session—underscoring the strong institutional commitment to advancing innovative approaches in graduate education.

In his presentation, Dr. Marcial unpacked the design and implementation of micro-credentialing in Philippine higher education. He emphasized how micro- and stackable courses empower learners to acquire targeted competencies that align with institutional goals and industry demands. According to him, micro-credentialing provides educators and professionals with greater flexibility to upgrade their skills while fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

Dr. Marcial also highlighted the potential of micro-credentialing initiatives to enrich academic programs by enhancing faculty expertise and promoting globally responsive graduate education.

This webinar forms part of VSU Graduate Education's continuing efforts to champion academic excellence, professional growth, and global competence through innovative and responsive educational programs.



GRADUATE EDUCATION UNIT CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS AT DANMAR WITH LAUGHTER AND REFLECTION

The Graduate Education Unit gathered for a heartfelt Christmas Party at Danmar, Brgy. Bitanhuan, Baybay City on 17 December 2025. The celebration was intimate, allowing everyone to truly connect and share the spirit of the season.

The program began with Rose, Bud, Thorn, a reflective sharing activity where each member spoke about their rose—personal achievements from the past year, their bud—hopes and wishes for the coming year, and their thorn—regrets or missed opportunities. This activity set a meaningful tone for the evening, encouraging openness, gratitude, and heartfelt conversations that strengthened bonds among the team.

After the reflections, the mood shifted to lighthearted fun with the Color Game, inspired by a TikTok trend. Each participant brought six identical items of the same color, sparking laughter and creativity as everyone proudly compared their colorful finds. The group then enjoyed a hearty dinner, where stories and laughter flowed freely, followed by an exchange of gifts that symbolized generosity and camaraderie.

The evening concluded with group photos, capturing not just smiles but the warmth and unity of the Graduate Education family. Though small in scale, the celebration was rich in meaning, reminding everyone that Christmas is not about grandeur but about togetherness, gratitude, and shared joy.

As the Graduate Education Unit looks forward to 2026, the memories of this evening will serve as a reminder of the strength found in community and the hope carried into the new year.