

Balitaan

A Note from Peace Corps Philippines Country Director

Peace Corps Philippines made the tough decision to evacuate all of its Peace Corps Volunteers on Friday, March 13, 2020 [due to COVID-19]. All volunteers departed the Philippines by March 19.

Peace Corps Volunteers and Staff alike rallied through an emotional and challenging time together. The evacuation brought out the best in everyone. Genuine care, cooperation, trust and understanding was shared by all.

While all Peace Corps Philippines Volunteers and Staff should be commended for their dedicated and incredible teamwork, a special shout-out and kudos go to "Team Cebu." "Team Cebu" was made up of 8 PC staff who traveled from Manila to Cebu to support and assist volunteers during the evacuation. "Team Cebu" willingly stepped-up and volunteered to travel to Cebu, not knowing when they would be able to return to their families in Manila. Thankfully and gratefully, our U.S. Embassy partners assisted so our staff could quickly and safely return to Manila.

Long-standing, strong partnerships and supportive relationships amongst volunteers, staff, host-country partners and the embassy allowed for the evacuation to go as well as it did. Peace Corps' national partner, The Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) as well as our many, many partners at the provincial and local

levels were incredibly helpful, understanding and supportive of the decision. We couldn't have done it without some of their heroic efforts!

While there's no clear timeline on when volunteers can return to service in the Philippines, Peace Corps Philippines Staff are busy teleworking and preparing for when volunteers can return - everyone is anxious for that day to come!

Monica Collier
Country Director
Peace Corps Philippines

Scholar Letter Update on COVID

By Cristjan Dave T. Bael

Greetings of peace! I am Cris from Cebu City, Philippines. I am currently in the second year of my undergraduate studies in the University of the Philippines Cebu studying Bachelor of Arts in Communication. I have been busy with our mobilizations in response to COVID-19 and write to share an update with you, our donors.

With regard to my university life, our administration suspended both online classes and submission of deliverables. However, our University Board of Regents (BOR) insisted in extending the semester until May 2020 (which will give students a deferred grade) or finish the courses by April 30 which then prompted a mass movement (composed of students, faculty, and staff) calling to end the

semester. This proposal was presented because [1] families need to focus on survival instead of academics, and [2] it's difficult to compress the syllabus to catch the April 30 deadline set by our BOR. However, some of my professors didn't like our BOR's decision, thus insisting on mass protest of the idea.

As of the moment, I am busy leading mobilizations in response to COVID-19. My team launched "EdukAKSYON Kontra COVID-19" (loosely translates to *education in action against COVID-19*). We created IEC materials (a bi-fold brochure) containing



important information about the pandemic. The contents are laminated and written in local languages (specifically in four Visayan languages) to make it community-friendly. We deem that, now more than ever, health communication is crucial to keep communities informed on the perils that this virus poses. An educated community can help people fight against the virus. Now, our IEC material has been assisting local government units (LGU), rural health units (RHU), and barangay health units (BHU) in educating their respective communities across the Visayas region by using it as a supplementary educational and communication material. You may check our page [facebook.com/VYMCentralVisayas](https://www.facebook.com/VYMCentralVisayas) to know more about our initiative.

Editor's update: This effort has also appeared in some national Philippine [media outlets](#) as well.

SCHOLAR ESSAYS

Editor's note: Scholar essays are from the previous completed semester (i.e. Fall 2019-2020)

Reflection on my 1st Semester

Dan Tristan Dingal is pursuing a BS in Engineering at Philippine State College in Cebu

The 1st semester of the Academic Year 2019-20 was the most challenging semester of my college life so far because both of my academic and extracurricular activities were very demanding and time consuming.

On the academic side, almost every subject of this semester was giving me a hard time, but the subjects Aircraft Design I and Aircraft Structures II gave me most of a hard time. Design's objective was to give students more technical knowledge on the aircraft design process considering many factors such as safety protocol, supply and demand of materials, aircraft's purpose, physical and economic constraints. We were required to come up with our own aircraft and give it a name as our final output. We theoretically designed a single piston engine, propeller-driven aircraft that its main purpose would be for air charter services. It was named Columbus, after the famous navigator and traveler Christopher Columbus. The subject gave me extensive theories in the aircraft design process that would be very useful when I'll be in the aviation field in the near future.

In terms of the most demanding subject, it would be Research Methods and Applications. We were required to come up with a thesis topic and finish the data collection, analysis and recommendations in just a span of one semester. Other schools usually allot three semesters to finish their respective thesis. My groupmates and I were hardworking and determined to finish. Our thesis topic was airfoil optimization for electric airplane applications. I'm

glad that we defended our thesis topic and we passed the subject as well.

I am the A.Y. 2019-20 VP for Internal Affairs of Aero-AT Student Organization, which its primary objective is to cater the needs of Aeronautical Engineering and Air Transportation students. A major activity conducted by the organization was



the Victory Party 2019 to congratulate the new engineers of the recently concluded three-day licensure examination of the Aeronautical Engineering graduates. Our school garnered a passing rate of 84.13%, which is the highest passing rate nationwide, and showed its academic excellence by garnering the top 6 out of top 10 places. One of the organization's program that I am about to spearhead is the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP). In my personal experience I know that a student's problem goes beyond the four corners of the classroom. In reality, a student does not only deal with problems with regards to maintaining a good academic standing, but would also need to ultimately deal with financial constraints. So that's why MAP was envisioned. It aims to provide an immediate financial assistance for students who would be needing it. I hope that it would create a positive impact in the long run. Being the Vice President for Internal Affairs of the Aero-ATSO is truly both fulfilling and challenging. Challenging because I have to spearhead and oversee projects that would be beneficial to my fellow students. But it is also

fulfilling for the fact that I get to serve other people. Overall it makes me grow into a better person.

Goal 101: Enthusiasm Achieved!

Marie Angela Rivera is pursuing a BA in Education at Central Bicol State University in Camarines Sur

In my fifth academic year in college, it was my first time to attend college in August. There were lots of adjustments that we had to deal with. This time, I was not expecting that the opportunity that I waited so long would come earlier than I thought. Our college chairmen announced in a general student meeting that they would send 3rd- and 4th-year students to be the University's outbound student teachers for the SEAMEO Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange Program to Indonesia in September. I was one of the ten chosen student teachers from the three participating campuses of the University. I was eventually deployed to Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

The experience at first was hesitating because I was sent to the foreign province alone, but I eventually enjoyed the journey as I met a fellow student teacher from Capiz State University, new Javanese buddies, colleagues at SMP Negeri 5 Depok where I had my first off-campus teaching, and family members of the teachers when I visited their homes. I visited temples in Yogyakarta including Borobudur Temple (to where I spent my 21st birthday) and Prambanan Temple. I was also able to see the sea for the first time in my college life when we visited two beaches: Pantai Goa Cemara and Pantai Baru. To sum it all, this is the most beautiful part of my college journey so far and I am grateful that I was given this chance.

This semester, our class section facilitated the Farm Families seminar on Organic Farming conducted in December 2019 participated by grade 7 and 8 students and their parents. My classmates and I who were enrolled in Field Study 6 were the student facilitators. I would never forget how boldly I danced

“Kiss Me, Take Me” alone in front of the audience to engage them with the activity. It was embarrassing because I wasn’t good at dancing, but I dared because I was a facilitator.

Next semester will be the one I have been excitedly waiting for real because I’m going to experience semester-long pre-service teaching and this time, in a public secondary school near the University. After graduation, I plan to teach in a private grade school for at least a school year to earn teaching experience. At the same time, I’ll enroll in a review center as a preparation for 2020 LET and I hope to pursue graduate studies right after graduation. I hope to become a DepEd teacher in my elementary alma mater soon.

Thank you so much, PSAA Family, for being a major part of my college journey. Padangat ko po kamo. Dios mabalos po!

Happy and Capable

Jemimah Tuguinay is pursuing a BS in Secondary Education at Ifugao State University

It is strange to think that my first semester is almost over. It seems like yesterday was the first day of school. My mind swells with a lot of different emotions. Fortunately, happiness is the strongest emotion I experience. I am so happy that I was able to complete my first semester. I am filled with pride because of all the hard work and dedication paid off with a successful semester. I can recuperate from the late nights in the library, the stressful tests and quizzes, and the times where I sacrifice my meals just to finish my homeworks and projects.

In my first semester, I have not only gained an incredible amount of knowledge academically, but truly I learned a lot about myself too. I learned that doing my best counted far more than academic ability. Because of my family, teachers and people who believed in me, I also learned that I was capable

of more than I thought and I have been pushed beyond my comfort zone.

As a future effective English teacher, I had taken numerous English subjects, going through the English program taught me so much more than stuff of literature and language, it has taught me how to be me. I have learned here how to write and express myself, most importantly I learned to appreciate the importance of literature and language. I have also had my Demo Teaching during this semester which help me to boost my self esteem and confidence as well as it inspire my career aspiration. I learned that being open to approaches and styles of teaching that I am not particularly used to is beneficial for me to learn more ways that I can help my future students when I will be teaching. I really enjoyed this semester despite all of its hardships and challenges.

Final Year: Getting Ready

Lee Rachel Cotabato is pursuing a BS in Secondary Education at the University of Southern Mindanao

College is a time of momentous change for the majority of students, a venturing stone to the following phase of life. It is a stage when most students are becoming more self-governing, embracing further responsibility, becoming mature, exploring own goals and dreams, and developing as individuals. Yet, college is also a phase of challenges, new involvements, changed outlooks, and successes in everything from classes to life itself.

I am now in my final year as a college student and this is my 3rd semester (1st semester of 4th year) as a PCAFPD scholar. In considering what worked well this semester, for me, time management and organization were by far the most important skills. My classes are tedious and challenging. I learned quickly that I must be organized to keep track of assignment due dates to stay on the right path. Maintaining a planner for assignments, projects, other school-related activities and even out-of-school events helped this organization. Additionally,

time management is key for me. As a fourth year student, field studies, seminars, demonstrations, reporting, etc. involve a significant time commitment. Thus, it is essential to have established study times every day in order to ensure that my assignments and studying are accomplished. This creates a fixed schedule so that I am not scrambling and rushing to complete assignments and projects. I am sure to schedule some free time with friends or for enjoyable events.

Time management and organization help me to be successful this semester. However, I would not have made it this far without a good support system. My first support system is my family, especially my parents. My family is my rock that keeps me grounded and firm. They are the reason why I strive hard in my studies not just for myself but also for them. This is the greatest lesson I have learned this semester. Relating this to larger events, I can use this skill of mine in my future profession and that is being a teacher. Being a teacher is the hardest yet noblest job I ever know. From lesson planning, to teaching, to managing the classroom and touching students' lives. To be able to get all of this done, you need time management and careful organization of schedules.

A Fruitful Semester

Jennifer Remigio is pursuing a BS in Medical Technology at DMMC Institute of Health Science

This semester was like a roller coaster ride for me. Beginning the school year with a responsibility was quite challenging. I was elected as president of our organization, the Association of Future Medical Technologists or AFuMet. I learned so much about how to organize an event, how to compose a project proposal and to create our own mission, vision and by-laws. I also was given the opportunity to represent our department in the Student Council election but unfortunately I lost. Nevertheless, I experienced a lot by running for that position. I

believe that defeated or not, I already won because I acquired experience and that's all that counts. I also became the coordinator in our recently concluded sports fest. I enjoyed the company of my schoolmates and the games of course. I participated in table tennis, scrabble, volleyball and basketball. Our team came 3rd overall. It was a fun and exciting sports fest and hoping for better next year.

Also, it was a fruitful semester. Being a second year student is not easy but I got a good grip on everything so my semester went so smoothly. This academic year taught me a lot. I've learned so much about my future profession, for example, in a newborn, a medical technologist can tell if a baby has a certain hereditary condition through karyotyping. Karyotyping is the arranging of chromosome in its metaphase stage for examination. I become more interested in my program because of this. Furthermore, medical technologists are also using statistics in running the laboratory and it's surprising. What image I had in mind was, a med tech running a laboratory test and releasing its result but it is a new level! As my professor explained how statistics can help a med tech, my respect for them got sky high. Imagine, aside from doing a laboratory tests, they can manage to check the quality of their laboratory equipment and the reliability of the result using statistics. Moreover, my course also taught me how I can be a big help in my community. You see, a medical technologist can go to the field and start studying a certain community as part of being a public health professional. Some questions that can be answered by a public health professional are as follows; how a community is at risk in different epidemics, how an increasing population can be a big factor in the health and safety of the people in a community and how the fertility, mortality and migration can affect the population as a whole. Those lessons came from my major subjects such as Cytogenetics, Biochemistry and Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

I am looking forward to next semester as our professional subjects are about to unfold. Those professional subjects will prepare us for what's ahead and I am aware that it's not going to be easy. There will be sleepless nights, restless days, congested weeks and stressful months but I must conquer it. And speaking of sleepless nights, our schedule for the second semester has already been fixed and as I checked it, our dismissal will be around 7 or 8 o' clock in the evening. Due to my late dismissal and for my own security, I am planning to rent an apartment near the school next semester. I already talked to my guardian about it and he was okay with my decision. Aside from the fact that I do not have to commute late at night, it is better to keep my body healthy by resting early after school hours so I decided that I will be renting an apartment near the campus. I already canvased the prices of apartments near the school and the ranges are from 2,000 pesos up to 4, 000 pesos per month. I'm reflecting on how tight I am going to be in terms of budgeting but I believe that I can do it. What is sure is, I am eager to finish this race and become a successful allied health professional able for me to pay back, not only PCAFPD but to our community. Thank you and see you next semester!

FINANCIAL UPDATE FROM OUR TREASURER

By Mike Ollinger

Recent events have made us think more about our health and our finances. Hopefully, we are all safe and thanks to your support the financial health of PCAFPD is strong. Our 2019 revenue was \$69,318. And we only spent \$8,872 on fundraising and overhead, of which the newsletter was the biggest expense. Currently, our annual revenues are enough to support about 100 students under current costs. Our intake of 26 students this year puts us on course to reach our capacity in four years although

we may accept even more. In the past couple years, we have financed fewer students; this is a temporary lag because changes in the Philippine education system reduced the number of graduating seniors.

The reduced number of scholars combined with recent changes in Philippine educational policies that have lowered scholar costs has led to an excess of revenues over costs. That surplus will be used to ensure that current students are fully funded throughout their college years and to grow the program in the coming years.

The financial future is uncertain. Our funding comes from you. Over the next few years, financial returns and employment may weaken, possibly affecting your income and our revenues. At the same time, the Philippine government could reduce its current level of support for scholars, raising scholar costs for us. We, of course, do not know how this will turn out, but we do know that PCAFPD revenues held steady during our most recent recession over 2008-10. Hopefully, it will remain the same during the upcoming recession. As of now we are set to fully support our scholars and see them through these challenging times.

Reason to Reconnect

The PCAFPD wants more great scholarship applicants – You can help!

Let your host family, counterpart, and Filipino friends know about our scholarship program and spread the word. The FAQs and application are on our website, rpcvphilippines.org.

The deadline to apply is September 30. What better reason to reach out and reconnect with old friends and family than to help put a deserving student through college or graduate school?

RPCV CONNECTS WITH SITE AND WITH PCAFPD

By: Maureen Carroll

Mark Horowitz, a long-time supporter of PCAFPD, made his first trip “home” to the Philippines since his service in 1965-67 as an elementary school English teacher in Atimonan, Quezon Province. We were especially pleased that Mark included a visit with our PCAFPD team in Manila during his trip, which took place in February of this year.

Mark spent two weeks at his former site, now a large municipality 107 miles south of Manila on the eastern shore of Quezon. He was especially struck by the huge population growth (doubled since the 1960’s) and increased pollution. “Houses are everywhere,” he said. In his day, there were only five cars in town and only the main road was paved. Now numerous tricycles and cars contribute heavily to the pollution. On the other hand, Mark was impressed by infrastructure enhancements: a new hospital, a public high school, a senior center, a fishing wharf and terminal to ship fish in refrigerated trucks to Manila, and several resorts with first class tourist amenities.

One important aspect of Atimonan had not changed—the friendliness of the people. He was able to reconnect with several old friends and the family he lived with and to have conversations with many people as he walked around town. He also taught three English classes to students studying the tourism business.

Mark has contributed to PCAFPD for a least 20 years. He gives to show his appreciation for his experience in the Philippines and the kindness and thoughtfulness of Filipinos he knew. During his visit, he wanted to see what he could learn about the program on the ground, and if he could contribute beyond donations.

Mark spent a Sunday morning in Makati with VP Roland de Jesus, Board Member Geri Maiatico, and former scholars Hannah Catiis, Jessa Escame,



Fernando Eco, Aries Asilo and Rachel Briones, who comprise the Ituloy team, now administering the program. Afterwards, of course, they all went out for a traditional lunch. Mark said this about his experience, “I was immensely impressed by the scholars, how courteous, how well they have done in their careers and how incredible their English is...how bright they are and how dedicated Roland is.”

Since his return Mark has been in contact with PCAFPD President Paul Aleckson, beginning the exploration of ways he might help to enhance the program. We welcome his continuing commitment to the Philippines and to our program.

With degrees in government and political science, Mark spent his career in local government in northern Virginia. Now retired, he is a resident of Fort Collins, Colorado with his wife Nance. He was a member of Philippines XV.

If you have been “home” since your service and would like to share about your story, please email us at pcafpd@gmail.com.

2019 Lakan/Lakambini Honor Role

Lakan (m) and Lakambini (f) are used in the Philippines to refer to those who have achieved the highest rank in an endeavor. We are using the terms here to express our profound gratitude to our major contributors. Those listed below gave \$500 or more in the calendar year 2019. Salamat po!

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