



BALITAAN

Newsletter 81

Fall 2025

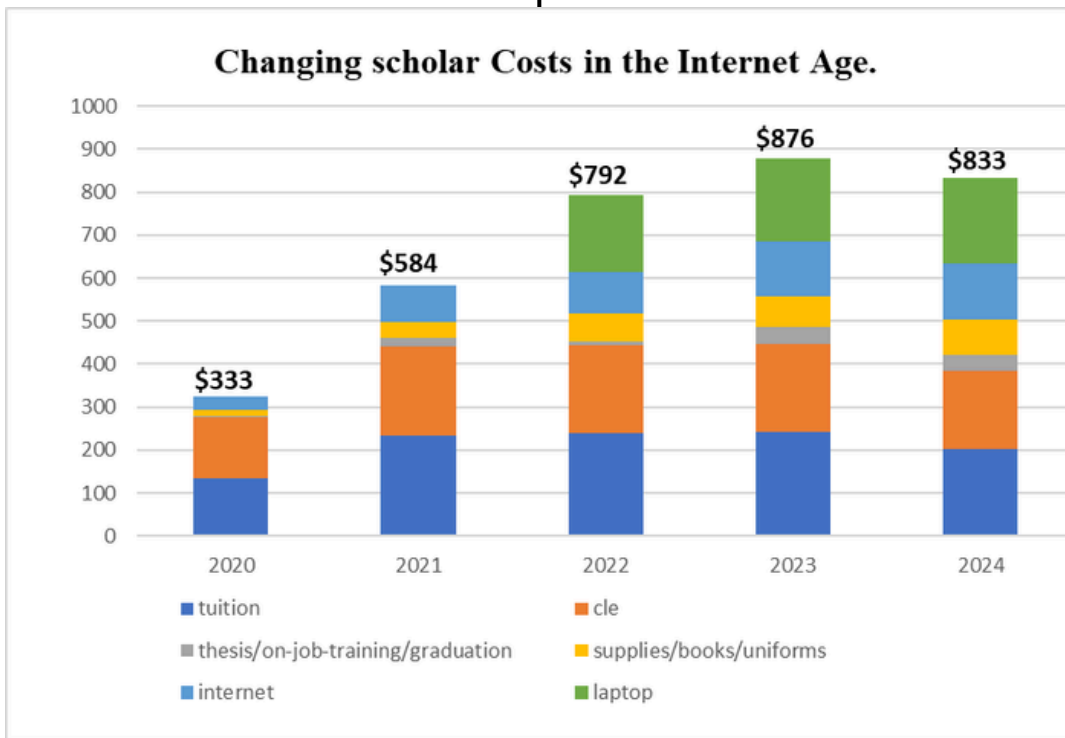
Change of Scholar Cost in the Internet Age

by Mike Ollinger, PCAFPD Treasurer

Funding higher education in the Philippines has shifted dramatically since many of us served as Volunteers. Twenty years ago, tuition and contributions to living expenses (CLE) accounted for about 80 percent of a PCAFPD scholar's total costs, and internet access was essentially nonexistent.

That landscape changed when the Philippine government introduced free tuition for many students. Scholar costs dropped to a low of \$333 in 2020, but soon began to rise again as reliable internet access and, increasingly, a laptop became essential to academic success. The pandemic made these needs unmistakable when classes moved fully online.

At first, providing laptops for every scholar seemed financially impossible. Then a long-time donor's generous \$50,000 bequest allowed PCAFPD to purchase a laptop for each scholar at the time – an extraordinary



The Foundation's aid has truly meant the world to me and made this achievement possible. To the entire PCAFPD team, I dedicate this milestone to you! ~ Luzyrna Yzabell Rossi De Jesus, 2025 Graduate

gift that helped bridge the technology gap. Today, the cost of a laptop is built into our support for every new scholar we accept.

As shown in the accompanying graph, annual per-student costs grew from roughly \$330 in 2020 to about \$830 in 2024. These figures reflect only direct scholar support. Administrative expenses, including mailing, printing, U.S.-based overhead, and registration costs in the Philippines, add approximately \$150 per student, bringing the full annual cost to about \$980.

These rising costs reflect the realities of modern education, where technology is a core requirement rather than a luxury. The initial bequest gave PCAFPD a strong foundation, but sustaining this level of support for current and future scholars depends on ongoing donor generosity. At \$980 per student-year – less than \$90 per month – a PCAFPD scholarship remains an exceptional way to invest in the next generation of Filipino leaders.

We invite you to support PCAFPD in whatever way works for you: mail a donation using the enclosed remittance envelope or give online at our website (listed below or via the QR code). If you are interested in sponsoring an individual scholar throughout their educational journey, please contact us at pcafpd@gmail.com.



Join the Bayanihan Legacy Circle

Have you designated PCAFPD as a beneficiary of an IRA or stipulated a bequest to PCAFPD in a will or trust? If so, we'd like to know.

The Bayanihan Legacy Circle recognizes those of you who plan to support the work of PCAFPD beyond your lifetime.

Send an email to us at pcafpd@gmail.com or snail mail us at P.O. Box 100114, Arlington Virginia 22210 to let us know of your plans or to seek more information. Maraming Salamat!

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Meet the 2025 Scholarship

Class



Shaine



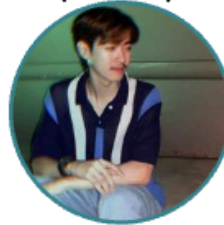
B.S. Computer Science

Jane



B.S. Computer Science

Kenshin



B.S. Computer Science

pee Jay



B.S. Computer Science

Marianne



B.S Computer Engineering

Jason



B.S. Criminology

Jazreen



B.S. Criminology

Mary Grace



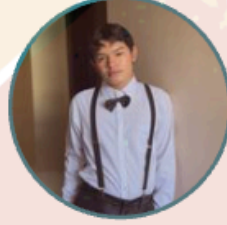
B.S. Education, English

Nurfaisa



B.S. Fisheries

Rojan



B.S. Tourism Management

Harry



B.A. Journalism

Juliana



B.S. Chemical Engineering

Jimmy



B.S. Industrial Engineering

Jaztine



B.S. Chemical Engineering

Alain



Master of Social Work

Rui Isaac



B.S Applied Economics



2025 Human Development Grant Winners

By Justin Tabor, Grants Manager

One of the aspects of our Human Development Grant program that I love the most is that each year's cohort has presented a unique set of creative projects, sectors, and relationships with the Peace Corps. I believe the 2025 batch is going to exemplify how PCVs and their sites can harness our grant to trigger local development. All three grantees are Filipino organizations that have a PCV supporting their work and all three have chosen to focus on bettering their local environment.

Quipayo National High School in Camarines del Sur was awarded \$820 for their Youth in Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O). With the assistance of their PCV, they will be collecting waste from around the school, which will be used to construct a set of Ecobrick benches on their campus.



PCV Ashlin Klocke, her counterpart Maam Gladys Borja, and students from Quipayo National High School pose with one of their recently constructed Ecobrick benches, made from recycled materials.

In Lingayen, Pangasinan the Youth Volunteer Facilitators of Lingayen (YVFL) have been awarded \$700. With the guidance of local PCV, these funds are being used to launch a river cleanup and maintenance program that aims to keep their local river clean, and collect key data to monitor its health over time.

Finally, in San Jose de Buenavista, Antique, the local Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) has been awarded \$500 to revive an annual environmental summer camp for youth. The camp will also make use of an environmental learning facility that has largely been unused, to highlight the potential value of this special resource.

As the year continues we are excited to see these projects develop, and for the relationships between PCVs and their communities to become stronger.

Scholar Essays

One More Step Closer

Icy Cate Pampolina is pursuing a Bachelors in Elementary Education from Pambayang Kolehiyo ng Mauban

The scholarship I received has been instrumental in shaping my college experience and alleviating the financial burden on my guardians. This financial assistance has been more than just monetary; it represents an investment in my future and a belief in my potential. The ability to pay all my school fees in one payment for the entire semester eliminated a significant source of stress and allowed me to focus on my studies without the constant worry of impending deadlines and financial constraints. This

stability has been invaluable, allowing me to fully immerse myself in my academic pursuits and extracurricular activities. Additionally, I am able to do my thesis without thinking any cause.

This semester taught me a lot, just like past semesters. It has been a significant learning experience. The ability to continuously learn and explore new things has greatly impacted my academic performance. Even though creating lesson plans, conducting teaching demonstrations within a week, presenting reports, and most importantly conducting our research was incredibly stressful. Despite of that I am still grateful because this is a source of growth and development. The financial assistance allowed me to purchase and create my own instructional materials, enriching my teaching demonstrations and providing me with hands-on experience in designing engaging and effective learning resources. This has been particularly valuable in developing my understanding of how to tailor teaching methods to diverse learning styles and needs. Being called "teacher" during my teaching demonstrations also motivates me a lot to continue pursuing the dream I've started. My journey as a third-year college student in Pambayang Kolehiyo ng Mauban (PKM) has been rewarding and challenging. The combination of rigorous academic coursework, research, and the invaluable support of a scholarship has equipped me with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to pursue my passion for teaching. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity and look forward to making a positive impact on the lives of my future students. One more step closer; in the blink of an eye, I'll be a certified fourth-year college student next school year.

This is Icy Cate Pampolina, a proud Ilonggo. Kaya maga hambal ako "Padayon propesyon, padayon teacher" That's why I will say, "Keep Going for Profession, Keep Going to be a Teacher".



Photo: Icy Cate at the head of the class.

Wired for Growth: My Final Year

Mary Gold Grafia is pursuing a B.S. in Electronics Engineering at the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines

This past semester has been one of the most challenging yet fulfilling parts of my college journey. As I tried to balance my On-the-Job Training (OJT) at Xinyx Semiconductor with completing and defending our thesis, I found myself constantly racing against time. Managing both responsibilities was far from easy, I often had to sacrifice rest, social time, and even sleep to meet deadlines. But through it all, I learned how to manage my time more effectively and push through when things got difficult.

One of the most significant milestones this semester was passing the entrance examination and being accepted as an

intern at Xinyx Semiconductor, a well-known company in the field. I felt both honored and nervous, knowing that I would be joining a community of engineers whose work directly impacts real-world technologies. This opportunity allowed me to learn about layout design for Integrated Circuits (IC), which was something I had only encountered in theory before. Seeing how these concepts are applied in actual projects made everything I learned in school come alive.

Inside the company, I found a supportive and inspiring environment. Our supervisors did not hesitate to give us feedback, both positive and critical, which I learned to accept with an open mind. I realized that criticism, when taken constructively, becomes a powerful tool for growth.



Photo:
Graduate
Mary Gold
Grafia

Our senior engineers also played a big role in our learning. They guided us patiently, shared their experiences, and helped us improve in our assigned tasks. Being surrounded by such passionate individuals inspired me to pursue excellence and made me even more certain that I want to become an engineer someday.

At the same time, we were also working hard on our thesis titled "Development and Energy Use Optimization of a Wireless Sensor Network for Marine

Protected Area Monitoring." It was not easy balancing both OJT and thesis work, but it became easier when I noticed how they complemented each other. We were able to apply many of the things we learned at Xinyx, especially in terms of design, testing, and analysis into our research. Successfully defending our thesis, both the proposal and final defense, without any need for re-defense, was a proud moment for me. It was the result of long nights, teamwork, and guidance from our mentors.

Being part of Xinyx and working on our research also gave me a deeper appreciation of how engineering can be used to help society. Our project aimed to support environmental monitoring, and I saw how technology could help protect marine biodiversity, something highly relevant to the Philippines as an archipelagic nation. This made me more motivated to contribute to solutions that benefit both people and the environment.

Looking back, I'm grateful for the struggles I faced because they taught me resilience, discipline, and humility. I believe these experiences are shaping me not just to be a better student, but also a more capable and responsible future engineer. I'm excited to use what I've learned to help others in my community and continue growing in this profession.

Contributions from our generous supporters:

Many thanks to those listed below who made gifts to PCAFPD between April and Oct 2025. IHO and IMO are gifts In Honor Of or In Memory Of the person or group indicated.

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