

# AUP HIGHLIGHTS

The Official Newsletter of the Adventist University of the Philippines

AY 2025 - 2026 | Volume 14 Number 2 | July 2025

## NAST PHL-DOST Awards Dr. Laborde for Outstanding Research on Brown Rice

**D**r. Gladys Mae Laborde, Graduate Health Department chair, received the 2025 Outstanding Scientific Paper Award from the National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines (NAST PHL-DOST) during its 47th Annual Scientific Meeting at the Manila Hotel on July 11, 2025.

Dr. Laborde received recognition for the pioneering study, "Brown Rice Consumption and Changes in the Metabolic Risk Factors of Non-Communicable Diseases in Selected Overweight and Obese Filipinos," pub-

lished in the Philippine Journal of Science. This milestone marks a historic first for the University, which received its inaugural NAST recognition as a result of the study. This achievement highlights the Adventist University of the Philippines' (AUP) growing role in nutritional science and public health research.

Dr. Laborde shared that the research journey began as a challenge from Dr. Jolly Balila, the University Research director, to pursue studies that would make meaningful contributions to the University. She noted that her inspiration came through prayer and a providential encounter with existing research on brown rice.

"During a seminar, I prayed for direction and was drawn to a brown rice study on lab rats. The idea of conducting human trials felt daunting, but Philippians 4:13 reassured me," Dr. Laborde said. She added that a remark from a Korean friend also shaped the mission behind the study. "My friend observed that Filipinos seem to love their pets more than themselves, pointing out that pet feeds were brown and nutrient rich, while people continued to eat nutrient-stripped white rice," she explained. "That realization helped spark the research."

"For Filipinos, 'rice is life.' So why not make life healthier?" Dr. Laborde expressed. The study's findings showed that individuals who consumed brown rice experienced



more significant improvements in body mass index, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol compared to those who only shifted to a vegetarian diet. The results affirm the value of whole, plant-based foods in disease prevention. Aligning with biblical health principles, "this affirms God's original design for nourishment in Genesis 1:29 and the health counsel found in The Ministry of Healing by Ellen G. White," she said. "Brown rice isn't just a healthier alternative, it's a wiser choice your body will thank you for."

Dr. Laborde emphasized that the recognition reflects scientific integrity, faith, teamwork, and mission. She acknowledged the guidance of her co-authors and mentors, Dr. Miriam Estrada and Dr. Marissa Romero; supported by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research and PhilRice; and the involvement of the research participants and research team.

As Laborde concluded, "It's still the same kanin we love, packed with fiber, vitamins, healthy oils, and phytochemicals, which are lost in refining."



# UNAI Dean Visits AUP for International Faculty Exchange, Teaches Auditing Principles

**D**r. Judith Sinaga—dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Advent Indonesia (UNAI), Bandung, Indonesia—visited the Adventist University of the Philippines-College of Business (COB) as part of the ongoing faculty exchange program between the two institutions.

During her 3-day visit, Dr. Sinaga delivered a series of lectures on auditing and assurance principles to COB accountancy students. The Lectures enriched their understanding of key auditing concepts and international perspective on current practices in the field.

Her visit aligns with the Memorandum of Agreement signed between COB and UNAI, which aims to promote cross-border academic collaboration and professional development among faculty and students. The exchange program underscores the commitment of both institutions to Adventist educational values and global engagement.

COB looks forward to more fruitful collaborations with UNAI in the future, including research partnerships, student exchanges, and joint academic initiatives.



## Mercado College Benchmarks AUP's Allied Health Programs

**T**o strengthen and align academic excellence in allied health education, key administrators and program leaders from Mercado College visited the Adventist University of the Philippines. The visit mainly focused on education programs and those related to allied health sciences.

Representing Mercado College were the following:

- Dr. Cornelia R. Catalla, dean of the College of Nursing and Midwifery
- Andres F. Laude Jr., dean of the School of Allied Medicine
- Dr. Menardo Bautista, quality management director
- Engr. Eduard Yap, General Services Department manager
- Clark Joy Barias, program chair of the College of Nursing and Midwifery
- Ellise Mae V. Calongcalong, officer-in-charge, program chair of the Physical Therapy Program
- Marjonel L. Acedera, program chair of the Medical Technology Program
- Jobelle Dimaano, laboratory management team leader

The team engaged with AUP's faculty and toured laboratories and facilities to gain insights into best practices in curriculum design, laboratory management, faculty development, and student-centered learning strategies.





# COE Dedicates the Heralds

With hearts full of purpose and minds ready to serve, future educators of the Adventist University of the Philippines College of Education (COE) were formally consecrated during the Pinning and Dedication Ceremony at the Philippine International Church on July 11, 2025.

Faculty, family, and friends joined to affirm the students' journey into teaching. The solemn evening began with a prelude by Con Corda. Masters of the ceremony Kyla Shayne Rivera and Remson Zaldivar guided the ceremony.

A heartfelt praise was led by Solace Hamir Ty and Rona Mae Villanueva, accompanied by Maren Cruz as pianist. Special Needs Education majors provided sign language interpretations, allowing all to participate in worship.

Mr. Roland Gadela, COE faculty, offered the invocation. Dr. Cecilia Ronia, COE Elementary Education Department chair, warmly welcomed guests and acknowledged the journey that led pre-service teachers to the moment. "This evening is not just a ceremony," she noted. "It is a sacred dedication to serve, lead, and transform lives."

Dr. Jeremiah Fameronag, COE dean, introduced the keynote speaker, Prof. Ferdinand Esplana, CST faculty, known for his spiritual devotion and academic leadership.

Prof. Esplana delivered a faith-anchored message, emphasizing that teaching is more than a profession, it is a ministry. He drew from his own experience and reminded students, "The classroom is your mission field. Let Christ be seen not only in your words, but in your patience, your integrity, and your compassion."

The musical groups COE Voices and Psalms inspired reflection and celebration. Heartfelt testimonials from former teacher-interns Starlene Buitizon and Nemuel Royo brought inspiration as they shared stories of growth, faith, and perseverance. A moving intermission by the COE String Ensemble led to the pinning and coating ceremony, the symbolic heart of the program. As pins were affixed and coats worn, future educators ceremonially accepted their responsibilities. Dr. Gracel Ann Saban, vice president for academics, offered a solemn charge. In response, Jessmar Sauza delivered a strong commitment speech on behalf of the batch, promising to uphold the values of Christian education.

Students next joined in candle lighting, symbolizing their role in carrying truth and love into the world. While singing their commitment song, hope and anticipation filled the atmosphere. Pastor Lani Esteves, PIC senior pastor, offered a stirring dedicatory prayer, sealing the evening with a blessing.





# 66 Baptized as Indigenous Mission Group Brings God's Love to Zambales Mountains

A total of 66 individuals accepted Jesus Christ through baptism following the recent Indigenous Mission Group (IMG) outreach in the Zambales mountains. The IMG Thanksgiving Vesper Service, held on July 4, 2025, at the Philippine International Church, celebrated this milestone, emphasizing the mission's impact and the group's ongoing commitment to service, obedience, and faith.

This recent outreach to the indigenous communities in Zambales brought together 25 undergraduate students, 14 medical students, 12 new alumni, 4 faculty and staff, and 6 non-AUP volunteers. Despite heavy rains, travel challenges, and financial uncertainties, the mission team remained steadfast, fueled by a commitment to serve by faith.

"The moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have a task to do," shared Bro. Conrad Lo, IMG adviser. "That task is to make disciples. Our ministry does not end with baptism; it must continue through discipleship."

The group shared testimonies of how the mission not only shaped the lives of those in the mountains but also their own personal walk with God.

Bro. Josephat Labosta, a theology student, reflected on the mission as a redirection to his calling: "God continues to use young people to share His plan of redemption, even to the most remote places. That is why I serve, because I love His Word, I love His church, and I love God."



Some stories highlighted the emotional and relational impact of the trip. Bro. Moises Olarte, an academy faculty member, recalled how they helped rebuild not just shelters, but also family ties. After sensing tension between a father and son, he encouraged them to have a conversation. That simple nudge led to the father and son reconnecting. "We're not just there to preach. We're there to build relationships that heal," he shared. He also shared how the locals used donated Bibles not just for devotion, but as literacy tools, learning to read by reading God's Word.

Sis. Trisha Dadula emphasized the power of compassion. She spoke with a young girl who wanted to pursue her education but felt discouraged due to discrimination. "Love is a universal language," she reflected. "This mission taught me to see others with compassion."

Despite warnings about hostility in certain areas, Sis. Camille Olivar, assigned to the

farthest village, testified about the kindness they received. Locals who had long felt isolated due to prejudice welcomed the missionaries warmly, even building them a shelter. "It was their first time to feel seen and valued," Camille said. Her passion for returning to mission service was rekindled after learning that a baby from a previous mission area had passed away due to preventable illness. "God made a way for me to return," she shared.

Rooted in the core value of exemplary service, the Indigenous Mission Group remains a platform for young missionaries to embody Christ's example, serving with compassion, conviction, and courage.

As 66 individuals publicly committed their lives to Christ, the missionaries testified that they, too, were transformed. Not by their own strength, but by God's. "Mission doesn't begin when you arrive on site," one volunteer shared. "It begins the moment you say, 'Yes, Lord. Send me.'"





# AUP Spiritual Enrichment Week Highlights Theme of Renewal Through Christ

The University observed its Spiritual Enrichment Week, which focused on the theme from Isaiah 43:19, “Behold, I will do a new thing,” from July 14 to 18, 2025. Dr. Robin Ramroop, the resource speaker, drew his messages from the life of Joseph. Throughout the spiritual week of nightly worship, the University community was invited to trust God’s power to bring renewal, transformation, and purpose in every circumstance.

The daily messages emphasized practical lessons from Joseph’s journey, connecting them to Christian living and service.

The opening message focused on the symbolism of Joseph’s receiving a new coat, reminding the AUP community that new clothes represent a new assignment in God’s work. “He wants you to do your job differently. You are not just here to teach a class. You are here to make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters,” Dr. Ramroop shared. “Jesus wants to do a new thing in your life.”

The second day explored Joseph’s time in the pit, pointing to God’s ability to work in dark and uncertain moments. Dr. Ramroop emphasized trusting God in the pit. “When you are in your pit, how do you respond? Would you trust Jesus with your life while you are in the pit? Jesus can still work in the darkness.” Dr. Ramroop said, added, “I have also been in a pit, but I know Jesus cares, and He can do a breakthrough in your life.”

The third day underscored that a change of attitude impacts spiritual altitude, drawing lessons from Joseph’s life as a slave and prisoner. “Put Jesus in you. Jesus can make a difference in your life. Only God in heaven can change your attitude.”

The fourth day highlighted Joseph’s rise to rulership, pointing out that God’s plans are not limited by human credentials or past failures. “We are looking for people who can enter into the hallway of trust with Jesus.”

The final message focused on forgiveness as the key to a breakthrough, drawing from the fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams. “We tell ourselves we’ve already forgiven those who hurt us. We say the pain is gone. We ask Jesus to take it. But sometimes, we’re still quietly holding on. Healing begins when we finally loosen our grip and let God hold what’s too heavy for us.”

Through inspiring messages and moments of reflection, the AUP Spiritual Enrichment Week fostered a renewed sense of hope and faith throughout the University community. Participants were encouraged to embrace transformation, trust in God’s guidance, and extend forgiveness—carrying these lessons forward into their daily lives. As the week concluded, everyone was reminded that renewal is always possible through Christ, empowering each individual to face challenges with courage and purpose.



# Sola Gratia Chorale Wins 4th Asia Choral Grand Prix, Testifies to God's Grace Through Music

The Sola Gratia Chorale (SGC), representing the Philippines, was declared champion of the 4th Asia Choral Grand Prix held at Victoria Concert Hall, Singapore on July 24, 2025. Conducted by Cyril Punay, the choir shared the stage with outstanding finalists from South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines, inspiring audiences and judges with their heartfelt performance and artistry which reflected God's grace.

SGC earned its place in the Asia Choral Grand Prix after emerging as the winner of the Singapore International Choral Festival 2024. SGC had the privilege of sharing the stage with four outstanding finalists: the University of Mindanao Chorale (Philippines), Cheorwon Boys and Girls Choir (Republic of Korea), PSM Vocalista Harmonic ISI Yogyakarta (Indonesia), and Korea Choir (Republic of Korea).

The Asia Choral Grand Prix is one of the most prestigious choral competitions in Asia, featuring choirs that excel in vocal artistry and performance. This victory marks a milestone for SGC, which continues to dedicate their music to God's glory and grace alone.

For the members of SGC, this achievement is rooted in their mission to serve God. "This recent win isn't just a triumph of skill or musical precision, it is the fruit of hearts united in purpose and grounded for ministry to sing for God. Every song, every phrase, we still sing with our hearts, with our eyes fixed on Jesus," Martina Valencia, a member of SGC and an AUP College of Medicine student, reflected on the deeper meaning of the win. "The calling is the same: to bless, to serve, and to reach others through music. And we continue not by our own strength but by grace alone."

Ruffelle Mae Ayore, another SGC member and alumna of AUP, emphasized that the choir's name is a constant reminder of its foundation. "God's plan for SGC is far greater than we can imagine. Everything we are and everything we do is only by His grace. We lift up the name of Jesus, knowing that apart from His mercy, we would not have come this far," Ayore shared in her recent Facebook post.

This year's grand prix also featured another Philippine finalist, the University of Mindanao Chorale, alongside Sola Gratia Chorale. The two choirs made a strong impression, representing the country with both musical excellence and heartfelt performances.

Joey Gianan Vargas, a respected figure in the Philippine choral community, shared his pride: "I felt so proud and moved seeing these two great Philippine choirs perform. They have set the bar high not only in musical excellence but also in giving their hearts and souls through music."

Irvinne Redor, performing arts manager at Sanghimig Performing Arts, likewise commended the group for its recent win in the 4th Asia Choral Grand Prix.







## Advent Euphonic Chorale Earns Second-Highest Score at Prestigious UK Music Festival

The Advent Euphonic Chorale (AEC) garnered international recognition after receiving the second-highest score in the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, one of the world's most prestigious choral competitions, held in Llangollen, North Wales, United Kingdom on July 13, 2025.

Representing the Philippines, the AEC, under the direction of Ray Angelo Capiendo, demonstrated remarkable talent in the prestigious competition featuring elite ensembles from around the globe. With an impressive score of 96 points, AEC achieved the second-highest score, after the Bob Cole Conservatory Chamber Choir, the previous 2016 World Choir of the Year from the USA, which scored 98 points. Additionally, AEC surpassed the New Zealand Youth Choir, the current choir of the world, which earned a score of 95 points. This outstanding performance reflects AEC's dedication and artistry in choral music, placing them in the same league as world title holders.

Their participation in the festival was not only a testament to their musical talent but also a testament to their strong commitment to their faith. AEC made the heartfelt decision to forgo two of the originally planned categories scheduled for Saturday morning.

By choosing to enter only the Open Category, a highly competitive division, they demonstrated their unwavering conviction to honor the Sabbath while placing their trust in God, who brought them that far.

"Never doubt His plans," Capiendo shared in his Facebook post, explaining how they were informed that two of the three categories they planned to join were scheduled on the Sabbath. He expressed that he had doubts because the only option left for them was the Open Category which in him, was the most challenging. Amidst the doubts, he found inspiration in the strong spirit of the group. Even if the group had limited options, they moved forward with peace and conviction, knowing that "the God who called us would carry us through."

Capiendo recounted how blessed he felt that the group had made it this far: "I thank God for the people He has placed around me." He also recounted the joy of sharing the stage with outstanding choirs who were previous and recent winners of prestigious competitions.

AEC's performance drew admiration not only for its artistry but also for the testimony it carried. "Though we may not have earned

the title "Choir of the World," being seen by the people of Llangollen as a 'faith-based choir' is a far greater joy and honor," Moreen Rodelas, an AEC member, conveyed. "We are truly living in answered prayers," she concluded.



The chorale also extended their gratitude to their parents, sponsors, alumni, supporters, and the AUP community, many of whom offered resources and prayers leading up to the event. As Sugar Tortal wrote, "May your voices always be a vessel for God's glory, touching lives and drawing hearts closer to Him as you continue to serve faithfully."

AEC witnessed for God through music, uplifting hearts with one song, one heart, one goal for one God.

As Capiendo says, "Dear God, diolch!"





## AUP Alumni Celebrate Legacy and Mission at Texas Sabbath Gathering

**A**UP Alumni gathered for a sabbath alumni worship at the newly finished sanctuary of the Metropolitan Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in Missouri City, Texas. The event, held on July 19, 2025, brought together alumni, family, and friends for a day of worship, testimony, and thanksgiving under the theme “Shine On Together: God Is Limitless!”

The worship service was led entirely by alumni, featuring musical offerings and testimonies that pointed to God’s leading.

The Sabbath School lesson was led by a panel consisting of Ruby Karamihan, Marc Amado, Michael Aquitania, and Millard Dalida, and was moderated by Sam Palomero. The discussion centered on God’s guiding hand during challenging beginnings and affirmed His faithfulness through transitions and trials.

Professionals from healthcare, ministry, education, and science shared how their University experience shaped their journey, both spiritually and professionally.

Dr. Lawrence Gayao, Class of 1966, expressed gratitude for his early education at the University. He continues to champion the

gospel through digital media and biblical literature, remaining active in spiritual outreach.

Leah Almazora-Par, Class of 1995, reflected on how her AUP nursing education empowered her not only in healthcare but also in ministry. “The training I received at AUP equipped me to serve in both the clinic and the church,” she said.

Pastor Rodel Liwanag, currently serving in New Mexico and the Texico Conference as Health Ministries Director, shared his deep appreciation for AUP’s spiritual and academic foundation. “AUP’s nurturing of faith, character, and excellence has been instrumental in shaping the servant of God I am today,” he said. “Thank you for being a vital part of my calling and mission.”

Memorie Joy Abuel-Diaz, Class of 1996, proudly identified herself as one of the first graduates under the University’s new name, AUP. “It is an amazing feeling to know that God has made me shine for Him as I touch lives every day,” she said. “Forever, I will shine on for Him until Jesus comes.”

Dr. Jerry Tamayo recounted how an unexpected visit to the campus in 1987 changed the course of his life. After earning his bache-

lor’s degree in life sciences elsewhere, he followed God’s leading into graduate studies and teaching at AUP, later completing his PhD in molecular genetics and nutritional biochemistry. “It was at AUP where I first sensed God’s call in my life. It became the place where I was transformed, and where I first introduced Jesus to my students.”

Pastor Abner Razon, also from the Texico Conference, traced his journey back to his elementary days at AUP. “AUP shaped me not only academically, but also spiritually and morally,” he shared. “To my beloved AUP, shine on forever. Never grow tired of your mission to educate, inspire, and consecrate young lives for God’s work. I will carry your legacy with pride, hope, and gratitude.”

Following the lesson, Pastor Rolando Baysa, host pastor of Metropolitan SDA Church, introduced Dr. Arceli Rosario, president of AUP, as the Sabbath speaker. In her message, Dr. Rosario emphasized the transformative value of Adventist education, calling it an excellent evangelistic avenue of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “In our Adventist schools, our are children trained for service, the young people are trained to become missionaries who will go far or near to preach the second coming of the Lord and to prepare a people to meet Jesus when it comes this is the



reason why we exist this is who we are our identity and our mission.”

After the morning worship, attendees enjoyed a fellowship lunch filled with laughter, memories, and reconnections. The afternoon continued with a gospel musical program, featuring alumni, families, and friends offering songs of praise and testimonies that

gave glory to God.

Dr. Rosario also presented updates on the University’s current growth, academic progress, and the active spiritual life of students, strengthening the sense of shared mission among the alumni.

This Texas Sabbath gathering served as a

powerful reminder of the lasting legacy of Adventist education and the shared calling to witness for Christ. From the classrooms of Silang to the churches of Texas, the mission continues, carried forward by alumni committed to faith, service, and the message to shine on, forever.

## AUP Hosts a Heartwarming Homecoming at the 2025 GC Session

**M**ore than 200 alumni from around the world gathered for a joyful evening of reconnection and celebration at the “AUP Meet and Greet” during the 2025 General Conference Session at the Marriott Hotel’s Statler Ballroom in St. Louis, Missouri on July 10, 2025.

The event was filled with warm embraces, heartfelt conversations, and joyful laughter as AUPians spanning generations reunited with former classmates, professors, and friends. The atmosphere reflected the University’s enduring values and tagline, “on ever onward.”

A memorable highlight of the evening was the presence of AUP’s oldest alumna, Lily Alvarez Cabansag, Class 1953 BS Education. She is currently 101 years old and turning 102 in November.

Her presence served as a living testimony to a life dedicated to service and to the lasting spiritual and educational foundation built at the University.

The evening also featured an uplifting musical presentation by the Sola Gratia Chorale, an award-winning choral ensemble, which performed Filipino folk songs. The music echoed the joy of home in the Philippines.

Pastor Gerardo Cajobe, chairman of the AUP Board of Trustees, extended a warm welcome and shared a heartfelt message. He emphasized that wherever life leads, the values, friendships, and spiritual grounding formed, the University will always be the home.



Dr. Arceli Rosario, University president, presented updates from the University for the past academic year, highlighting completed infrastructure projects, academic milestones, and alumni-supported initiatives.

More than the program, the gathering was marked by moments of reconnection. Alumni shared testimonies, stories, and reflections that celebrated God’s leading in their lives.

Adding to the fun was a raffle of AUP merchandise, which brought further joy and fellowship to the occasion.





# AUP Faculty Joins National Photography Exhibit at SMX Convention Center

Ms. Sunshine Cervantes, faculty member of the Tradigital Finearts Department, participated in the 28th Edition Graphic Expo 2025, held at the SMX Convention Center, Mall of Asia, Pasay City, from July 17-19, 2025.

Ms. Cervantes was one of 29 exhibiting artists featured in the group show titled "Monochrome + One: Photography and the Art of Isolation", organized by the Philippine Society for Photography, of which she is an official member.

Currently teaching Photography, Photojournalism, and Art Appreciation, Ms. Cervantes integrates both technical skill and visual storytelling in the classroom. Her participation in this national exhibit reflects the University's commitment to promoting creativity, excellence, and cultural engagement.

In a Facebook post, the department commended her saying, "She believes in discovering one's place within the vast realm of visual art. Congratulations, Sunshine."



## EDITORIAL INFORMATION

AUP HIGHLIGHTS is a monthly newsletter of the Advancement Office

### AUP HIGHLIGHTS STAFF

**Oemer Rey T. Daquila**  
Advancement and Publication Director

**Rodel D. Romero**  
Layout Artist

**Charissa Uy**  
News Writer/Editor

**Sheri Joy Namanya**  
News Editor

Protos by: **Silang Memoirs & AUP CSC**

## AUP ADMINISTRATORS:

**Dr. Arceli H. Rosario**  
President

**Dr. Gracel Ann S. Saban**  
VP Academics

**Mrs. Aileenmae G. Silverio**  
VP Finance

**Dr. Julio C. Amurao**  
VP Student Services



Adventist University of the Philippines

*The School that Trains for Service and Prepares People for Heaven*

Address: Puting Kahoy, Silang, Cavite  
Tel No: (049) 541-1211  
E-mail: [admissions@aup.edu.ph](mailto:admissions@aup.edu.ph)  
Website: [www.aup.edu.ph](http://www.aup.edu.ph)