



# THE ACADEMIA

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# THE ACADEMIA

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## About the Cover

The University of Santo Tomas was declared a Pontifical university by Pope Leo XIII on September 17, 1902. Its strong Catholic identity is reflected in its enduring ties to the

Vatican, having welcomed three popes—Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, and Pope Francis. This issue's cover features one of the four lions surrounding the Benavides Monument, bearing the Vatican seal, symbolizing unity with the Church as Pope Leo XIV begins his papacy on May 8, 2025.

*Photo from alumnus Paul Quiambao, 2025*

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# UST MAx tops off William T. Belo Interdisciplinary Research Institute in Santa Rosa City



8 MAY 2025 | 9:00 AM | THURSDAY | UST MANILA ANNEX (SANTA ROSA CITY)

Vice Rector for Finance Rev. Fr. Roberto Luanzon, Jr., O.P., Wilcon Depot AVP and Corporate Lawyer Atty. Sheila Pasicolan-Camerino, Vice Rector Rev. Fr. Isaias Tiongco, O.P., JCD, Wilcon Depot Vice President for Investor Relations Ms. Mary Jean Alger, UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D., Vice Rector for Research and Innovation Rev. Fr. Jannel Abogado, O.P., DThPatSc, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs Prof. Cheryl Peralta, DrPH, Assistant to the Rector for UST Sta. Rosa Prof. Philipina Marcelo, Ph.D., and Secretary-General Rev. Fr. Louie Coronel, O.P., EHL

The University of Santo Tomas Manila Annex (UST MAx) at Santa Rosa City, Laguna, topped off the second building in its rising campus. Bearing the name of Thomasian alumnus and founder of premier home improvement and construction retailer Wilcon Builders Foundation, Inc., the UST-Dr. William T. Belo Interdisciplinary Research Institute (WiTBIRIn) had its solemn topping off ceremony on May 8, 2025. This is a builder's tradition that highlights the placement of the final beam on top of the structure.

The WiTBIRIn will provide research work stations and collaboration spaces for researchers in six interdisciplinary research areas, namely, (1) food security and safety, (2) health and wellbeing, (3) clean energy, (4) environmental sustainability, (5) information, communications, and emerging intelligent systems and technologies, and (6) advanced materials, engineering design, and product innovation. It has three floors with a penthouse and a service deck.

The ceremony began with the Entrustment to the Blessed Virgin Mary, led by the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs Prof. Cheryl R. Peralta, DrPH.

The UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D., marked this momentous occasion in the developing history of the rising annex at Santa Rosa City with a message.

In WiTBIRIn, "We see the embodiment of our commitment to nurturing the future generations of Thomasian academics,

entrepreneurs, researchers, and students," said Father Ang.

The Father Rector also expressed gratitude toward the alumnus after whom the structure is named, saying that "His commitment to giving back to UST has been instrumental in turning our shared vision into reality. Through his generosity and belief in the value of education, collaboration, and community building, he has played a vital role in bringing this vision to life. We want to convey our deepest gratitude to Dr. William T. Belo and to Wilcon Foundation for partnering with us to construct the Interdisciplinary Research Institute."

With a degree in BS Electronics and Communications Engineering (BS-ECE) from the UST Faculty of Engineering, William Belo began as an entrepreneur and owner of a small hardware store along Quezon Avenue in 1977, and eventually, Wilcon Depot opened its 100th store in 2024. He was conferred the Doctor of Commerce degree, honoris causa, on September 28, 2023, in recognition of his lifelong work and philanthropy.

Delivering a message on behalf of Dr. William T. Belo was his representative, Ms. Mary Jean G. Alger, the Vice President for Investor Relations of Wilcon Depot, who said "We are one step forward towards the realization of our vision to have a place that will foster a robust research culture where great ideas are explored and developed—ideas which surely will have a positive, tangible impact on society and elevate the quality of our lives. This indeed will be a building for learning, growing, and shaping the future, and





*UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D.*

soon, it will be filled with eager researchers and students.”

Also speaking were Vice Rector Rev. Fr. Isaias D. Tiongco, O.P., JCD, the Assistant to the Rector for UST Santa Rosa Prof. Philipina A. Marcelo, Ph.D., who presented the overview of the project, and representatives from JSLA Architects who shared a video on the construction and design process of the building, and the Vice Rector for Research and Innovation Rev. Fr. Jannel N. Abogado, O.P., DThPatSc.

The UST Vice Rector for Finance Rev. Fr. Roberto L. Luanzon, Jr., O.P., SThD, DL, presided over the Topping Off Rites.

The University of Santo Tomas Manila Annex in Santa Rosa City, Laguna, is being developed as a venue for the Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (RIE) Programs of the University. The UST-Dr. William T. Belo Interdisciplinary Research Institute is the second structure in the Annex (WiTBIRIn). WiTBIRIn, which broke ground in January 2024, “represents the future of research at UST, a future where collaboration across diverse fields addresses present social issues guided by our institutional mission, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the teachings of Pope Francis’ encyclical letter *Laudato Si’*,” said UST Vice Rector Rev. Fr. Isaias D. Tiongco, O.P., in his welcome remarks.

“Interdisciplinary research plays a crucial role in UST’s bid to increase institutional visibility, impact, and innovation through research,” said Father Ang, who added, “We hope that you will be inspired by our efforts so that you will not lose faith in the vision of UST. We share a common vision of dreaming boldly for UST, preserving her proud legacy while continuing to raise the bar of excellence for generations to come. It is true that UST is one of the oldest universities in the Asia Pacific, but it always reinvents itself.” ■



*Wilcon Depot Vice President for Investor Relations Ms. Mary Jean Alger*



*UST Vice-Rector for Finance Rev. Fr. Roberto L. Luanzon, Jr., O.P., S.Th.D.*





With joyful hearts,  
the University of Santo Tomas  
joins the Universal Church in welcoming  
His Holiness  
Pope Leo XIV  
who was elected on May 8, 2025,  
following the sacred rites of the Conclave  
and the traditional  
proclamation “Habemus Papam!”  
(“We have a Pope!”)

His Eminence  
Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost  
of the Order of Saint Augustine,  
having taken the name Leo the Fourteenth  
is the 267th Pope and 266th Successor of Saint Peter,  
Vicar of Christ, Bishop of Rome,  
Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church,  
Sovereign of the Vatican City State,  
and Servant of the Servants of God.  
He is also now the highest authority of our Pontifical University.



*Leo P.P. XIV*

## Prayer of Gratitude for the Gift of a New Pope

Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd and High Priest,  
we praise you and offer you our sincere gratitude  
for calling Pope Leo XIV to serve as the shepherd of the universal church.

May he lead us as a loving shepherd  
who cares for his flock and seeks out the lost sheep.  
May he be for us a gentle and listening father,  
a faithful teacher and a steward of your sacred mysteries.  
Grant him health, strength, and wisdom.  
Strengthen the bonds of unity among us  
so that we may serve you as one body.  
Purify us and sustain us in charity  
for your love for us never fails.

Grant that we may boldly answer your call to mission.  
You who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
God forever and ever.  
Amen.



## UAAP Season 88 roars with life as UST begins hosting stint

The University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) formally turned over hosting duties to the University of Santo Tomas (UST) during the closing ceremony of Season 87, which was hosted by the University of the Philippines – Diliman. The UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D., formally accepted the year-long task during the gathering on May 20, 2025 at the Mall of Asia Arena.

In the same event, UST brought home its eighth consecutive collegiate overall championship and its ninth consecutive overall high school championship.

UST currently has 48 overall championships in the collegiate division. There are also 24 in the high school division, for a total of 72.

The last time UST hosted the UAAP was during Season 79, with the theme “Dare to Dream.”

### UAAP Season 88 Theme

With the theme “Strength in Motion, Hope in Action”, Season 88 promises not only fierce competition among the country’s top university athletes, but also a celebration of boundless courage, enduring discipline, and the uniting spirit of sports.

UST expounded on the coming season’s theme, saying that “‘Strength in Motion, Hope in Action’ embodies the deeper meaning of competition: not solely to achieve victory, but to inspire transformation — of oneself, of teams, and of the greater community.” Season 88’s opening also falls within the Jubilee of Hope, a Catholic holy year declared by the late Pope Francis in his papal bull “Spes non confundit” [Latin for “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5)], which makes the theme more meaningful.

Furthermore, “Strength in Motion captures the relentless spirit of athletes who strive to achieve beyond their limits. It is the disciplined movement shaped by perseverance, the strength that does not merely endure but propels forward — seen in every sprint, every leap, every act of determination on and off the field. Hope in Action reflects the inner drive that sustains resilience. It is hope that manifests not only in dreams but in choices — the choice to rise after defeat, to believe despite uncertainty, and to continue striving for excellence even amidst challenges.”



The UAAP Season 88 logo, with flames in the member university colors forming the stylized number 88, was designed by the UST College of Fine Arts and Design



The UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D. (right), head of the UAAP Season 88 host university, joined by Season 87 host university UP President Atty. Angelo A. Jimenez [Photo courtesy of the official UAAP Facebook page]

### The Season 88 Logo

The UAAP Season 88 logo is a symbol of teamwork and solidarity among the UAAP member schools. It serves as a powerful visual representation of our shared commitment to building a better future through unity in sports and education.

At the heart of the design are two interlocking number eights, each drawn with similar yet distinct motions. Their intersection forms the shape of a flame—an emblem of passion, strength, and shared purpose. The common strokes between the figures symbolize the power that emerges when teams come together, while the flame reflects our burning desire for collective excellence.

The colors used throughout the logo are inspired by the official hues of UAAP member institutions. Interwoven into the design, they signify continuity and inclusivity—honoring the unique identity of each school while illustrating our ability to unite for a common purpose. The flowing lines suggest a sense of motion, reminding us that hope is more than optimism—it is action. It is the drive to transform aspirations into tangible efforts that create lasting, positive change. It’s about actively working toward a better future, together.

Together, these elements capture the essence of what Season 88 stands for: a celebration of the strength we possess when we move as one, and the difference we make when we act on our shared hopes and goals. ■

The UST delegation, led by UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D. (fifth from left), including officials of the IPEA led by Director/Regent Rev. Fr. Rodel Cansancio, O.P. (fourth from left), are declared collegiate overall champions—eighth in a row and 48th in total. [Photo courtesy of the official UAAP Facebook page]



## UST joins first-ever University Fair in New York City, welcomed by Philippine Consulate



*The UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D (fourth from left) leads the university's delegation to the University Fair in New York City, USA. He is accompanied by (from left:) UST REFI Stakeholders Engagement Head Mr. Cristian Naval, Deputy Director of the Office of QS/THE Rankings Engr. Nestor R. Ong, UST Graduate School of Law Dean Assoc. Prof. Jacqueline L. Kaw, DCL, Executive Secretary Prof. Marciana Agnes G. Ponsaran, Ph.D., UST Health Service Director Dr. Sheryl Dionisio, Assistant to the Rector for UST Manila Annex (Santa Rosa City) Prof. Philippina A. Marcelo, Ph.D., and OGEF Director Mr. Levine Andro Lao.*

The University of Santo Tomas (UST) joined the inaugural Philippine University Fair in New York City, USA, from May 31 to June 2, 2025, upon the invitation of the Consulate General of the Republic of the Philippines. Organized in partnership with the Philippine Independence Day Council, Inc. (PIDCI), this first-ever fair highlighted the excellence of Philippine higher education to the Filipino-American community and prospective students in the United States.

Consul General Senen Mangalile, in his opening remarks, emphasized the historic nature of the event – “This fair is a first-of-its-kind initiative at the Consulate, and we are proud to host it in partnership with PIDCI. It is an opportunity to reconnect with our roots and expand access to Philippine higher education.”

As one of the invited universities, UST's presence underscored its unwavering commitment to academic diplomacy, cultural engagement, and the formation of globally competent students rooted in Catholic tradition. Leading UST's presenters were the Father Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D.; Assistant to the Rector for UST Manila Annex (Santa Rosa City) Prof. Philippina A. Marcelo, Ph.D.; and UST Graduate School of Law Dean Assoc. Prof. Jacqueline L. Kaw, DCL. Their presentations and interactions captured the essence of UST's academic excellence, global reach, and distinctive Thomasian identity.

Completing the UST delegation were Prof. Marciana Agnes G. Ponsaran, Ph.D., Executive Secretary of the Office of the Rector; Dr. Sheryl M. Dionisio, UST Health Service Director; Engr. Nestor R. Ong, Deputy Director of the Office of QS/THE Rankings; Mr. Levine Andro H. Lao, Director of the Office for Grants, Endowments and Partnerships in Higher Education (OGEF), and Mr. Cristian Naval, Stakeholders Engagement Head of the UST Research and Endowment Foundation, Inc (REFI).

During the university fair's academic forum on May 31, the Thomasian leaders highlighted the institution's unparalleled heritage. Founded in 1611, UST is the oldest existing university in Asia and home to over 42,000 students from across the globe.

The Father Rector and his team shared how UST has evolved into a dynamic institution recognized as a Center of Excellence in multiple fields by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education, including medicine, pharmacy, teacher education, engineering, and philosophy.

The presentation showcased UST's affordability and accessibility, noting that tuition costs at UST are a fraction of those in the United States, about \$2,000 to \$3,000 per semester, while still offering state-of-the-art facilities, mentorship, and a vibrant, inclusive campus life. UST's location in the heart of Manila, a city brimming with history, culture, and warmth, was highlighted as a prime advantage for international students.

In his presentation, Fr. Ang described UST's approach to holistic education, having an environment that nurtures not only the intellect but also the spirit. “As a Catholic university founded by the Dominican Order, we nurture minds and hearts, rooted in faith, guided by reason, and called to serve,” he said.

UST's global connections and over 250 international partnerships were also emphasized, offering students opportunities for exchange, research, and cultural immersion worldwide.

As Consul General Mangalile noted in his address, Philippine universities have long shaped generations of leaders, scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, and faith workers who contribute to global society. The Philippine University Fair stands as a testament to this enduring legacy, forging new ties across oceans and generations.

Part of the activities also included the Philippine Independence Day festivities in New York City on June 1, reaffirming the enduring bonds of the Thomasian community and the University's steadfast commitment to upholding Filipino heritage on the global stage.

Held along Madison Avenue with a grand parade, exhibitions, and a concert, the 127th Philippine Independence Day Celebration drew hundreds of Filipino-Americans and friends in a vibrant showcase of identity, history, and culture. The event was organized by the PIDCI in cooperation with the Consulate General of the Philippines in New York.





HEI representatives with the Consul General Consul General Senen T. Mangalile of the Philippine Consulate General in New York (fourth from left), with top representatives from Philippine higher education institutions including the University of Santo Tomas Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D (third from left)



University of Santo Tomas Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D leads the presentation of UST's academic and cultural highlights

"The presence of the University of Santo Tomas and the delegation's presentation contributed significantly to the success of the fair and provided prospective students, Filipino-American families, and educators in the U.S. Northeast with valuable insight into the quality of global relevance of Philippine higher education," said Honorable Consul General Senen T. Mangalile. "[UST's engagements] helped foster greater awareness of academic opportunities in the Philippines and strengthen connections with our diaspora communities."

Leading the Thomasian contingent in the parade was Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D.

The event also served as a homecoming for the Thomasian alumni, who were gathered by Dr. Shirley Malabanan-Tansiongco. The distinguished roster included Dr. Luther Tamayo, Dr. Lito Domingo, Dr. Feliciano Embralino, Dr. Marissa Santos, Dr. EJ Fernandez, Dr.

Rosa Inciong-Reyes, Dr. Ramon Reyes, Dr. Aurora Gonzales, Dr. Antonio Gonzales, Dr. Orlando Fernando, Dr. Tina Goiri, Dr. Rainier Soriano, Dr. Alicia Almendral, Dr. Wilfred Villamater, Dr. Audrie de Jesus, Dr. Maria Faustina Calma, Dr. Reina Reyes-Constantino, Ms. Hasmine Manalungsung, Ms. Hazel Katigbak Education, Mr. Roman Solano, Dr. Naila Lambinico Trani, Ms. Amieliza Sansait, Dr. Emily Zipagan, Ms. Vicky Baxa, Ms. Liza Tan, Mr. Felix Manuel, and Mr. Fernando Mendez.

The University's presence also extended beyond the parade with a thoughtfully curated UST station along Madison Avenue. This academic showcase highlighted UST's rich heritage, global initiatives, and unwavering dedication to the formation of leaders anchored in faith and reason. Throughout the day, prospective students, alumni, and members of the Filipino-American community engaged with the team, exploring UST's programs and global footprint. ■



The Honorable Consul General with the Thomasian delegates at the UST Station.jpg  
The UST station is visited by Honorable Consul General Senen T. Mangalile (third from left). With him are: Dr. Lao, Engr. Ong, and Prof. Marcelo



The Father Rector leads the UST delegation and alumni during the parade at Madison Avenue, New York City



## 6891 Thomasians from Batch 2025 exit Arch

Almost seven thousand graduating Thomasians joined the celebration of the Baccalaureate Mass for Academic Year 2024 to 2025. The event had initially begun on May 30, 2025 at the Open Field and Grandstand, before being interrupted by heavy rain and adjusted to an indoor, two-batch event at the Quadricentennial Pavilion on May 31, 2025.

"When you carry Christ within you, the world responds... The storm that postponed the celebration is but a symbol that there will be many storms ahead—delays, detours, disappointments—but your task is not to fear them. Your task is to carry Christ through them," said the UST Secretary-General Rev. Fr. Louie R. Coronel, O.P., who presided over the morning batch.

Fr. Coronel explained, "Even though we have challenges in life, they are not reasons for us not to be joyful. That is our challenge: to remain in joy, in love. A Thomasian must always be in love. You are not just walking toward the Arch of the Centuries, you are walking toward a world, through the Arch, waiting for your witness, not just for your diplomas or awards, but your faith, hope, and love—your Christ-like heart."

For the afternoon session, UST Vice Rector for Finance and Faculty of Engineering Regent Rev. Fr. Roberto Luanzon, Jr., O.P., SThD, DL, lauded the efforts of the graduating students, saying that *"We celebrate and give thanks to the Lord for all your achievements. Nakikiisa kami sa inyong mga tagumpay."* (We are one with you in all your successes.)

Fr. Luanzon also reminded them, *"As you continue your journey, take with you the Thomasian values of competence, commitment and compassion: Competence that you truly learned the best that you can from your studies and you are ready to share them to your new workplace and to others, commitment that you are willing to give 100% to the work that will be entrusted to you, just as you did when you were still Thomasian students, and compassion that you have the heart for others who will need your care and love. Congratulations to our Thomasian graduating class of 2025!"*

The graduating students were each given a Thomasian Mission Cross, as a reminder of the Thomasian ideals instilled in them as students. A recitation of the Thomasian Pledge of Loyalty followed the blessing and imposition of the crosses.

Also part of the Post-Mass Program is the annual Ceremony of Light (Lumina Pandit) that represents UST's mission of illuminating the world through the light of education and evangelization. The flame that originates from the torch of the Presider is passed on to the torches of the Deans and Regents of the academic units and is received by their respective students.

After the Post-Mass Program, the graduating students symbolically left the University in the traditional recessional parade where they exit through the historic Arch of the Centuries, signifying the completion of their student life in UST. The academic officials led the procession walking out of the Arch, which was the original gateway of the University when it was still in Intramuros. This exit completes the cycle since the same students, when they were freshmen, entered the Arch to signify the beginning of their Thomasian life.

It would be remembered that in 2022, the same batch's Homecoming Walk was also marked by heavy rain.

The University of Santo Tomas started its graduation season beginning with the Student Awards Day held on May 23, 2025, with consecutive solemn investiture rites for each academic unit being held during the month of June. Graduation season ended on July 1, 2025, with the investiture ceremonies of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery. ■



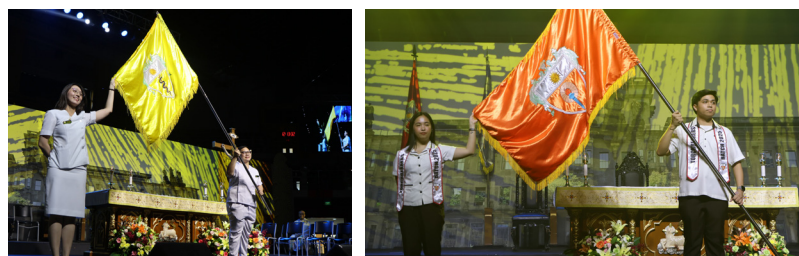
The Ceremony of Light is led by the Vice Rector for Finance Rev. Fr. Roberto Luanzon, Jr., O.P., who also serves as Regent of the Faculty of Engineering. The presider's torchlight is spread to the torches of the Deans and Regents, and later, to the candles of the graduating students.



Graduating students from the College of Science with their celebratory sashes and a tiger mascot



Students are led out of the Arch by the UST Secretary-General and College of Science Regent Rev. Fr. Louie R. Coronel, O.P., EHL (right) and the Facilities Management Office Director and Graduate School of Law Regent Rev. Fr. Dexter A. Austria, O.P., SThD. (left)



Representatives of the various academic units raise and present their flag



# IPM CEO urges Thomasian awardees to live with integrity in 2025 Student Awards



University of Santo Tomas (UST) Faculty of Arts and Letters alumna and IPM Group of Companies President and CEO Ms. Isabelita “Eisa” Paredes-Mercado graced the 2025 Student Awards Day with a keynote speech during the ceremony on May 23, 2025 at the UST Quadricentennial Pavilion Arena.

Deemed “a woman in a man’s world,” Paredes-Mercado shared that her education in UST gave her “a moral compass, a desire to serve, and the courage to build something meaningful” despite facing the challenge of uncertainty as a college student. Her courage has led her to where she currently is, insofar that she has also been recognized as one of the “Women building the country,” those who choose to lead the construction industry, a field dominated by men. Paredes-Mercado has contributed to the construction of schools, hospitals, railways, and dam rehabilitations, among others.

The conglomerate CEO reminded the Thomasian awardees of three things as they graduate and continue their journeys: “Let your excellence serve others... stand firm in your values... and live with integrity always.”

Paredes-Mercado concluded her piece, saying, “Wear your medals and honor with pride; but more importantly, carry your mission with humility and courage... May God bless your journey.”

For this year’s Student Awards, UST granted over 150 awards to its student achievers during the ceremony. UST Rector Very Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., Ph.D., congratulated the awardees, saying,

“Today is... a reminder that every recognition you receive carries with it a responsibility to continue striving to inspire others and to use your gifts with integrity and in accordance with God’s plan. The road ahead may test you in new ways, but I encourage you to face them with the same courage that brought you here.”

16 graduating students were conferred the Rector’s Academic Award for their outstanding academic performance.

In recognition of their contributions in the field of community development, Ms. Meckia Mari L. Villanueva of the Central Student Council and Mr. Christian Gradyml V. Benedicto of the Faculty of Pharmacy, alongside seven groups, were awarded the Pope Leo XIII Community Development Award.

The Benavides Outstanding Achievement Award, given to those who excel in local or international academic and scientific activities, was conferred to 18 individuals and 13 groups.

Five student organizations were also recognized for their contributions in conducting University-relevant activities over the past academic year. In relation, 26 student leaders were recognized for their excellence in leadership and service with the Quezon Leadership Award.

41 individuals and 27 groups were recognized for their contribution in the field of research, having been conferred the St. Albertus Magnus Award for Outstanding Research Work.

The St. John Paul II Tradition of Excellence Award was also given to the UST Men’s Beach Volleyball Teams in recognition of their consistent exemplary performance in the field of volleyball over the last five years.

Mr. Francis Kenneth Araya, a biochemistry student from the Faculty of Pharmacy, was named the valedictorian of the Class of 2025. Araya, in a response on behalf of the Thomasian awardees, said, “The medals and certificates we received today may glimmer with recognition, but what truly shines are the stories behind them – the setbacks we endured, the sacrifices we made, and the courage we summoned when things didn’t go as planned.”

Araya emphasized the importance of celebrating the journey to reach one’s achievement alongside their actual accomplishments. He also added that their work should not end after this year’s awarding ceremony, because “greatness is not born from ease, but from effort.”

The Student Awards Day is annually celebrated to recognize the excellence of Thomasians in different fields. It also marks the beginning of the University’s “graduation season,” with the Baccalaureate Mass following days after the event. ■



Student awardee Mr. Francis Kenneth Araya speaks on behalf of Thomasian Awardees for A.Y. 2024-2025



## UST CS Team designs detection system for microplastics, wins Health and Well-Being Track at 2025 NID



In a stunning display of innovation and technical prowess, the junior Computer Science team from the University of Santo Tomas (UST) was declared the winner of the Health and Wellbeing Track at the Huddle, Analyze, Build, Innovate (HABI) Workshop, held as part of the 2025 National Innovation Day (NID) celebration.

The event, organized by the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev), formerly known as the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), took place on April 28, 2025, at Novotel Manila Araneta City. Team STAC, composed of Wilmargherix M. Castañeda, Jasmine Aubrey U. De Guia, Jam Meisy F. Tan, and Josh Kenn A. Viray, secured their victory under the guidance of their coach, Prof. Michael Francis D. Benjamin, Ph.D. Assistant Manager of the TOMASInno Center.

With over 60 teams participating from across the country, STAC advanced through a rigorous selection process, emerging as one of the top two teams among the 12 finalists in the Health and Wellbeing Track, and winning with “SeeBlue: Detect Microplastics in every Hue for You”. Their achievement highlights a strong commitment to addressing critical societal challenges through creative and practical technological solutions in the health sector, specifically, a system designed to detect microplastics in water. Such innovation targets several sustainable development goals such as Good Health and Well Being (SDG 3), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), and Life Below Water (SDG 14).

The event underscored the importance of a systematic design-thinking process, summarized by the acronym HABI. This approach guided participants through understanding user needs, defining problems, ideating, prototyping, and testing, while symbolizing the weaving together of diverse ideas and expertise to create impactful innovations in health and wellbeing.

The UST-STAC team’s victory is a testament to the power of collaboration and mentorship, reflecting a broader national effort to harness the passion of young innovators in pushing the boundaries of technology and design thinking.

As NID continues to engage the youth through hands-on workshops and networking opportunities, successes like this inspire the next generation of Filipino innovators to make meaningful contributions to society. ■

UST Team STAC with their coach, TOMASInno Center Assistant Manager Prof. Michael Francis D. Benjamin, Ph.D. (rightmost)



LEARNING AND EDUCATION	HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
<b>Camarines Norte State College</b> WheelLearn: A Solar-Powered School-onWheels with Modern Learning Tools for Basic Education Accessibility in Remote Manide Communities	<b>University of Santo Tomas Manila</b> SeeBlue: Detect Microplastics in every Hue for you
FOOD AND AGRIBUSINESS	TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS
<b>Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology</b> E-Limonggo: A data-drive decision support system for mud crab farmers	<b>Camarines Norte State College</b> Smartroad Sentinel: A maintenance prediction and mitigation system seamlessly embedded into existing LGU CCTVs and road infrastructure
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	
<b>University of the East Manila</b> GobAI	

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The UST team was named winner of the Health and Well-Being Track



## Suarez of UST GS, FMS receives 34th Dr. Jose P. Rizal Award for research



Dr. Suarez

University of Santo Tomas Graduate School (UST GS) Health Research program lead and Faculty of Medicine and Surgery academic staff Prof. Consuelo B. Gonzalez-Suarez, M.D., Ph.D., was named the recipient of the 34th Dr. Jose P. Rizal Award under the Research Category. The award was presented by the Philippine Medical Association during its 118th Annual Convention, held on May 17, 2025, at the Shangri-La Plaza.

The Dr. Jose P. Rizal Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the different fields in medicine, namely academics, clinical practice, community development, government service and health research in the Philippines.

Dr. Suarez has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and is currently the lead of the NICER Program (Niche Centers in the Regions for Research and Development) for the Center for Sports Medicine/Rehabilitation: OPLAN Atletang Pinoy, dedicated to conducting research aimed at improving athletic performance in the Philippines.

She also leads a groundbreaking international collaboration titled, "Precision in Motion: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Dynamic Shoulder Ultrasound Assessment Across Ethnicities and Pain Syndromes." This project is a joint initiative between the National Taiwan University Hospital, Beihu Branch, and UST, under the Manila Economic and Cultural Office – Taipei Economic and Cultural Office program. ■

## Thomasian architect Manalad is elected UAP National President

College of Architecture academic staff Asst. Prof. Jonathan V. Manalad is the new National President of the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP) - the Integrated and Accredited Professional Organization of Architects- leading the over 60,000 members worldwide.

Under Manalad's leadership, UAP's corporate thrust will be "Movers of Progress: Justice to the Profession, Visionary Initiatives, Member Empowerment".

Several Thomasians were also elected in key positions of UAP: National Executive Vice President - Ar. Chona E. Ponce (Batch 1980, former Acting Dean of the College), Secretary General - Ar. Rex Chua Tak (Batch 1991), National Treasurer - Ar. Mary Janessie Tumambing (Batch 1994), National Auditor - Ar. Ramon Teruel (Batch 1998).

Their term of office will begin on July 1, 2025 and will end on June 30, 2026. ■



Ar. Rex Chua Tak, Ar. Jonathan Manalad, Ar. Donato Magcale (outgoing UAP National President), Ar. Chona Ponce, Ar. Ramon Teruel



## Graduate School welcomes visiting professors from Asia, Europe

The Graduate School welcomed three distinguished professors for the second and special term of academic year 2024-2025.

Dr. Yaninie Phaithayawat of the Srinakharinwirot University handled courses for the second term under the History program. Together with UST academic staff Prof. Augusto De Viana, Prof. Phaithayawat taught the course, Seminar on the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation (1941-1946).

From the St. Mary's University, London, Assoc. Prof. John Lyndon taught alongside Prof. Belen Tangco who is the Program Lead for Political Science. Together they handled the course Values and Value Systems in the Management of Education.

Meanwhile, Dr. Neel Kamal Chapagain, a professor from the Centre for Heritage Management, Ahmedabad University, India, is set to teach in the Special Term of A.Y. 2024-2025. Through the existing agreement between the University and Ahmedabad University, Dr. Chapagain will be handling a course on Cultural Heritage Studies. ■



*Dr. Chapagain (second from left) with the UST Graduate School Dean Prof. Michael Anthony Vasco, Ph.D., CCCPET Director Assoc. Prof. Jocelyn F. Agcaoili, and NCCA Executive Director Dr. Eric Zerrudo*



*Dr. Yaninie Phaithayawat*



*Prof. Neel Kamal Chapagain*



*Assoc. Prof. John Lyndon*



# Gozum of IR co-authors studies on effects of digital technologies on healthcare, religious practices

**M**r. Ivan Efreaim A. Gozum of the University of Santo Tomas Institute of Religion recently published articles that examined the complex intersection of religion, ethics, and technology. Through these works, Gozum calls for deeper, critical reflection on how digital technologies are reshaping human experiences into two essential aspects of life: healthcare and religious practice.

The first article, published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, sheds light on the ethical challenges emerging in the era of virtual healthcare. Titled, “Encountering the Other in the Digital Sphere: Emmanuel Levinas’ Ethics of the Face and the Implications for Virtual Healthcare Ethics in Contemporary Society,” the paper, co-authored with Ms. Chastene Christopher D. Flake, an academic staff from the Angeles University Foundation, explores how digital health platforms and telemedicine risk undermining the depth of human relationships essential in patient care despite enhancing accessibility and efficiency. Drawing from the philosophy of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the authors highlight how Levinas’ concept of the “ethics of the face” — which demands moral responsibility upon encountering another person — is challenged in virtual settings where physical presence is replaced by screens.

The study warns of the potential for virtual healthcare to depersonalize interactions, reduce empathy, and treat patients as mere data points rather than unique individuals. To address these concerns, Gozum and Flake propose integrating Levinasian ethics into virtual healthcare practices, emphasizing empathetic communication, ethical attentiveness, and the preservation of patient dignity through technology. The paper invites both the medical and philosophical communities to confront the ethical implications of increasingly digitized healthcare services in a post-pandemic world.

From focusing on health care, Gozum explores religious practices in digital space for his second paper. Also published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, the study titled “Analyzing Physical to Virtual Religious Practices on Filipino Catholic Religiosity and Spirituality During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” explores the spiritual and religious implications of the Philippines’ transition from in-person to virtual religious practices during the pandemic. Known for its deeply Catholic identity, the Philippines was forced to adapt long-held religious traditions and celebrations — including Masses, processions, and festivals — to online platforms in response to health protocols.

The paper highlights how Filipino Catholic spirituality, deeply rooted in centuries of communal worship, was challenged yet reshaped through technology. Despite initial concerns over the lack of intimacy and physicality in virtual services, the study reveals that many Filipinos maintained, and in some cases even deepened, their religious commitments during lockdown. The Church quickly mobilized digital resources — from live-streamed Masses to virtual Visita Iglesia and online catechism — ensuring the faithful could continue participating in religious life from home. The study was done in collaboration with Mr. Reiner B. Lingad and Mr. Archimedes T. David—both are from the Angeles University Foundation.

While acknowledging the limitations of online worship, such as the absence of tactile rituals like receiving the Eucharist, the authors argue that the pandemic ultimately prompted a renewal of faith for many. The period of crisis fostered reflection, strengthened domestic spirituality, and expanded religious inclusivity by making services accessible to those previously unable to attend. The study concludes that although virtual practices cannot fully replace the communal and sensory richness of traditional worship, they have become valuable complementary tools for religious life in a rapidly evolving world. ■

## Research on anti-inflammatory properties of fucosterol bags prize at NATPRO9

**F**or his study on the anti-inflammatory activity of fucosterol, Mr. Rickson S. Gaspe, a Master of Science in Pharmacy student of the UST Graduate School, was awarded Best Oral Presentation (Associate Category) during the 9th International Conference on Natural Products (NATPRO9). The event took place from April 29 to May 1, 2025.

The conference, organized by the Asian Society of Natural Products’ Philippine Chapter, featured a wide range of keynote lectures and scientific discussions, drawing researchers and professionals from across the region to discuss the use of natural products. Together with his adviser, Dr. Agnes Llamasares-Castillo, Gaspe explored the anti-inflammatory activity of Fucosterol, a phytosterol compound derived from brown seaweed, using an integrated approach involving in-silico, in-vitro, and in-vivo assays.

This recognition further solidifies UST’s reputation as a leading institution for advanced studies and research in natural products. It also adds to the growing list of academic achievements by UST graduate students, reflecting the university’s commitment to excellence in research and innovation. ■



*Dr. Agnes Llamasares-Castillo, Dr. Supayang Voravuthikunchai (President of the ASNPP Main Chapter), Dr. Sonia Jacinto (Chairperson of NATPRO9), and Mr. Rickson Gaspe during the awarding ceremony of NATPRO9.*



## PCO's Atty. Castro, panel discuss governance, media relations amidst disinformation

The University of Santo Tomas (UST) Faculty of Arts and Letters hosted a masterclass on understanding government and media titled, "Truth, Trust, and Transparency: Highlighting Thomasian Identity in Navigating Governance and Media in the Age of Disinformation," at the Robert C. Sy Grand Ballroom of the Bl. Buenaventura G. Paredes, O.P., building on May 9, 2025. The event underscored the value of upholding the truth in a generation where disinformation is prevalent.

In her keynote speech, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Atty. Claire Castro emphasized the need for a shared responsibility among Filipinos in combating misinformation, having seen how the Philippines has become a "hotbed for misinformation largely due to our people's dependence on social media for news and entertainment." According to her, such a concern has become a threat to the nation's democracy as fake news continues to feed propaganda to people, "distorting public opinion and perception" on valuable matters such as politics.

Atty. Castro established that due to influencers being unbound from journalistic ethics and morals, they are able to create inherently harmful, albeit accessible, information unlike traditional media. To address this, Atty. Castro urged the audience to "cut through the noise with easily accessible and understandable communication," similar to how "trolls" would use their platforms. Wrapping up her speech, she encouraged Thomasians to speak the truth, where others will not, and to negate opinions – those rebranded as facts in an attempt to twist narratives – to the public.

Afterwards, representatives of the various facets of the University, namely, Graduate School of Law Regent Rev. Fr. Dexter A. Austria, O.P., S.Th.D., AB Department of Political Science Chair and academic staff Assoc. Prof. Dennis C. Coronacion, Ph.D., and Office of Public Affairs (OPA) Director Ms. Michaela O. Lagniton, M.A. gathered alongside Atty. Castro for a panel discussion moderated by AB Faculty Secretary Asst. Prof. Louie Benedict R. Ignacio, Ph.D., to discuss questions and dilemmas related to upholding the truth. During the panel, questions about fact-checking, propaganda, and the value of truth were highlighted.

The lecture and panel session paved the localized discussion on how truth is both devalued and valued in a society where disinformation increasingly persists. In the words of AB Dean Prof. Melanie B. Turingan during her welcome remarks, "Veritas in Caritate (truth in charity) is seeking knowledge and wisdom while acting with compassion and understanding," encompassing the Thomasian identity as constant seekers of truth when truth has sometimes become an afterthought. ■



Atty. Castro during her keynote speech



UST Secretary-General Rev. Fr. Louie R. Coronel, O.P., E.H.L., delivers the closing remarks



Fr. Austria, Atty. Castro, Prof. Coronacion, Ms. Lagniton, and Asst. Prof. Ignacio during the panel discussion



## UST explores hope in unity in 2nd Inter-Seminary Forum on Ecumenism

The University of Santo Tomas (UST), through the Graduate School (GS), Research Center for Theology, Religious Studies and Ethics (RCTRSE), Faculty of Theology, and the Institute of Religion (IR), hosted the 2nd Inter-Seminary Forum on Ecumenism, themed “From Conflict to Communion: Journeying in Hope Toward Christian Unity,” last April 12, 2025.

The forum gathered theological educators, seminarians, and church workers from various Christian traditions and was opened by Most Rev. Mel Rey Uy, D.D., Bishop of Lucena, who encouraged participants to work toward the unity expressed in the prayer: “That they may all be one.” Through keynote speeches, breakout sessions, and testimonies, attendees deepened understanding, explored the roots of division, and proposed paths forward in the ecumenical journey.

In her Keynote Address, Ms. Nilda Castro, from Mariapolis Peace, Focolare Movement Philippines, tackled the forum’s theme, “From Conflict to Communion: Journeying in Hope Toward Christian Unity,” by highlighting the causes of Christian division and exploring the efforts towards healing. She first noted the Great Schism of 1054, which split the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches over disputes like the filioque clause. She then examined the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, highlighting key figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. While these events led to a fragmented Christian landscape, Castro noted milestones in modern ecumenism, including the formation of the World Council of Churches and the 1999 Joint Declaration on Justification.

In response, Ms. Aileen Alava-Orillaza of the Asian Theological Seminary presented a post-colonial perspective on Philippine ecumenism, linking denominational fragmentation to colonialism and local tribalism. She advocated for “contextual ecumenism,” emphasizing dialogue that goes beyond doctrinal differences to engage with marginalized communities, using concepts like “loob” (inner self) to foster unity.

The forum featured four concurrent sessions exploring ecumenism across various disciplines. The first session focused on Biblical Hermeneutics and Ecumenism, specifically examining the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father,” in both Matthew and Luke. The second session addressed Morality and Ecumenism, where participants explored ethical divergences among Christian denominations, particularly in the areas of sexual ethics and bioethics. The third session revolved around Pastoral Theology and Ecumenism, focusing on John 3:16–17. Participants emphasized the importance of pastoral sensitivity and mutual respect in ecumenical dialogue, advocating for churches to act as agents of reconciliation amidst social disparities. Finally, the fourth session dealt with Spirituality and Ecumenism, emphasizing the relational nature of spirituality—engaging with God, others, and creation. The group underscored the importance of shared practices, such as prayer and hospitality, as vital for fostering genuine spiritual ecumenism and facilitating mutual transformation.

The forum featured compelling personal testimonies, including those of Rev. Erahvilla Maga-Cabillas of the Philippine Independent Church (IFI), Senior Pastor Rev. Leonard Arevalo, and members of the Focolare Movement and the Rizal Ecumenical Group.

In the afternoon plenary session, Rev. Fr. Cecilio Vladimir Magboo, O.P., S.Th.D., delivered a comprehensive theological reflection on Catholic ecumenism in the Philippines. In his sharing, Fr. Magboo proposed a framework for ecumenical conversion that consists of four components: Head - reforming theological thought



(From left:) St. Vincent School of Theology Dean Fr. Rolando Tuazon, CM, Rev. Fr. Cecilio Vladimir Magboo, O.P., S.Th.D., Most Rev. Mel Rey Uy, D.D., and Rev. Erahvilla Maga-Cabillas of the Philippine Independent Church (IFI)

and education; Hands - embodying unity through shared mission and service; Heart - cultivating a sense of affectivity and beauty in the ecumenical experience; and Holy - pursuing Christ-likeness together. He introduced the concept of “receptive ecumenism,” suggesting that churches should grow not by imposing their beliefs but by learning from one another. Fr. Magboo cautioned against the dangers of ecclesial self-sufficiency and instead advocated for humble self-criticism and a renewed willingness to journey alongside others. Furthermore, he emphasized that ecumenism must extend beyond doctrinal agreements and shared recognition of baptism. It should lead to a common witness and cooperative action in the world.

In a forward-looking initiative, the forum outlined the essential components required to establish a unified platform through the appointment of student representatives from various theological institutions. This effort aims to foster collaboration on a shared ecumenical framework, grounded in a fourfold dialogue model effectively adapted from interreligious practices.

The 2nd Inter-Seminary Forum on Ecumenism at UST transcended a mere scholarly conference; it was a living testament to the Gospel’s call for unity. From historical analysis to personal testimonies, and from theological discussions to shared prayer, the forum exemplified a beacon of hope in action. It reaffirmed that the journey from conflict to communion is challenging yet achievable and urgently necessary.

This event was organized in collaboration with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines – Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, St. Vincent School of Theology, and the Quezon City Ecumenical Fellowship. ■



## UST hosts National Summit to highlight climate change, conflict effects on conservation

In celebration of Heritage Month, the 2nd National Summit of Church Archives and Heritage Workers was held on May 20 to 22, 2025, at the Auditorium and Pre-function area of the Frassati Building, University of Santo Tomas, Manila.

Titled “Vulnerabilities of Ecclesiastical Archives and Cultural Heritage to Biodeterioration, Climate Change, and Political Conflict”, the three-day seminar-workshop underscored the impact of climate change on heritage and archival collections and explored methods for preserving cultural sites and collections relevant to climate change. This summit was held through the collaboration of the Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomas (AUST), National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) - National Committee on Archives, the Society of Ecclesiastical Archivists of the Philippines (SEAP), and the Dominican Province of the Philippines Cultural Heritage Committee.

The Euroasia Pharmaceuticals Corporation Chairman and CEO, Dr. Eugenio Michael Plana, delivered the keynote address, while the UST Rector, Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P., welcomed the participants through a video message. The definition and statement of purpose were presented by the UST Secretary-General Rev. Fr. Louie R. Coronel, O.P., EHL.

The first lecture was on “Safeguarding Sacred Stories: Overview of the Church Archives and Cultural Heritage” by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines Secretary-General, Msgr. Bernardo Pantin, JCD, followed by “Laudato Si’: The Church’s Historical Role and Responsibility in Addressing Climate Change”, which was presented by the UST SIMBAHAYAN Community Development Office Director, Asst. Prof. Froilan Alipao.

AUST Acting Archivist Rev. Fr. Gaspar Sigaya, O.P., discussed “Archives at Risk: Political Conflict and Its Consequences for Cultural Heritage – The 1954 Hague Convention” while “Cybersecurity on Ecclesiastical Archives and Heritage Libraries: Cyber Incident Response Plan” was tackled by Mr. Jayson Cruz from the College of Information and Computing Sciences of UST.

The final talk for Day 1 was “Case Study on Emergency Response of the Parishes on Tropical Storm Kristine: The Camarines Sur Experience” by the Director of the Archdiocesan Archives of Caceres, Fr. Francis Tordilla, prior to a Eucharistic Celebration and a welcome dinner.

For Day 2, a lecture by Prof. Karen S. Santiago, Ph.D., Associate Director of the UST Office for International Relations and Programs, and a Faculty member from the Department of Chemistry on “Degradation Factors and Reactions: Understanding the Impact on Historical Artifacts and Manuscripts” began the day’s proceedings. Following her talk, Ms. Lulu J. Del Mar, Records Specialist from Okada Manila, facilitated two workshops, “The Art and Science of Paper Conservation: A Workshop for Beginners” and “From Fragile to Fresh: The Art of Paper Restoration”.

In the afternoon, Ms. Jackylyn Delgado of the National Committee on Archives presented a “Case Study: ‘Fire hits National Archives Building. No important documents were damaged.’ Reflect and Evaluate the NAP’s Best Practices!”

Day 2 concluded with Assoc. Prof. Maria Bernardita Reyes, Chemist Conservator of Paintings, Paper, and Stone-built Heritage from the University of Santo Tomas, facilitating two workshops on “Disinfection and Disinfestation of Paintings” and “Protecting Historic Stone Objects from Microorganisms, Plants, and other Vegetation”.

National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP)



The Provincial Archivist of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, Rev. Fr. Wilhelm Boñon, O.P., CBCP, Episcopal Commission on the Cultural Heritage of the Church (EPCCHC) Executive Secretary Fr. Milan Ted Torralba, The Euroasia Pharmaceuticals Corporation Chairman and CEO, Dr. Eugenio Michael Plana, CBCP Secretary-General Msgr. Bernardo Pantin, JCD, FamilySearch Field Relations Manager, Mr. Felvir Ordinario, and AUST Acting Archivist Rev. Fr. Gaspar Sigaya, O.P.



Chemist Conservator Assoc. Prof. Maria Bernardita Reyes (seventh from left) and AUST Acting Archivist Rev. Fr. Gaspar Sigaya, O.P., (sixth from left) with workshop participants for disinfection of paintings



Ms. Lulu del Mar (standing, right) facilitates the workshop on paper restoration

Chairman, Prof. Regalado Trota Jose began Day 3 with his lecture on “Three Bibliographic Aids for Navigating Philippine Colonial Church Records”, followed by the Former Head of the Subcommission on Cultural Heritage Fr. Harold Rentoria, OSA, who discussed “Sacred Spaces: Mapping the Cultural Heritage of the Diocese”.

CBCP Episcopal Commission on the Cultural Heritage of the Church (EPCCHC) Executive Secretary Fr. Milan Ted Torralba shared insights on the “Transformative Power of Preserving the Archives and Cultural Heritage of the Church,” after which Chairman Victorino Mapa Manalo, Director of the National Archives of the Philippines, shared an Inspirational Talk on “Reading Boljoon: From Records to Retablo.”

The three-day seminar ended with the highlight of launching “eTabularium: Bridging History and Technology: The Digital Parish Records Initiative”, led by Msgr. Pantin, Prof. José, Fr. Sigaya, and FamilySearch Field Relations Manager, Mr. Felvir Ordinario.

For 2025, the National Heritage Month had the theme “Preserving Legacies, Building Futures: Empowering Communities through Heritage.” ■



## UST Hosts EdTech 5.0 Conference in Celebration of Innovation and Legacy

In celebration of the University of Santo Tomas' 414th founding anniversary and the 30th anniversary of its Educational Technology Center, UST successfully hosted the groundbreaking conference, "Harnessing EdTech 5.0 as Catalyst for Sustainable and Transformative Innovations," on May 15 to 16, 2025. This milestone event brought together over 250 participants from across the academia, industry, and government, uniting thought leaders and practitioners to explore the future of education in the age of intelligent, immersive, and human-centered technologies.

Jointly organized by the Educational Technology (EdTech) Center and C&E Adaptive Learning Solutions, and backed by a roster of esteemed sponsors and partners, the conference served as a dynamic platform to exchange insights and showcase innovations aligned with EdTech 5.0. With four major plenary sessions, two panel discussions, 19 paper presentations, and eight hands-on workshops, attendees were immersed in discussions on ethical AI, sustainability in digital learning, workforce readiness, and transformative pedagogies.

Plenary speakers included UST College of Education Assistant Dean Dr. Louie B. Dasas, Dr. Naoki Suzuki of Tokyo Gakugei University, Mr. Julian Dominic D. Ducut of UST Senior High School, and Prof. Donald G. Manlapaz of the UST College of Rehabilitation Sciences. Their talks underscored the importance of personalized learning, cross-sectoral collaboration, and technological adaptability in building future-ready education systems.

The conference also celebrated UST's recent induction into the prestigious Digital Education Council and highlighted its recognition in the Silver Tier of the Times Higher Education Online Learning Rankings. Interactive workshops such as the Student StartUP event "ClashBytes," XR & Metaverse Integration workshop, AI workshops for teachers and students, Arduino workshop, STEAM solutions workshop, and the EdTech Ecosystem showcase provided opportunities for real-time innovation demonstrations and collaboration. In addition, a nostalgic summary of the EdTech Center's history was also presented at the conference, with former administrators honored on stage for their contributions.

Staying true to the theme of the conference, innovative and sustainable practices were implemented during the two-day event. Environmentally conscious efforts such as digital verifiable badges, reusable lanyards, and sustainable dining materials were used, reflecting UST's commitment to sustainability and hitting SDGs. As a confluence of legacy and innovation, the EdTech 5.0 Conference not only achieved its objectives but also paved the way for a more connected, inclusive, and resilient digital learning landscape in the Philippines and beyond. ■



UST College of Education Assistant Dean Asst. Prof. Louie B. Dasas, L.P.T., Ph.D., in his talk on human-centered AI



One of the panel discussions of the conference



Former and current administrators of the Educational Technology Center



The Educational Technology Center team with the former and current administrators



## PITH-ReCon External Conference highlights tourism, hospitality functions for peace, stability



Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan Executive Vice President Rev. Fr. Reynor E. Munsayac, O.P. (third from left), with administrators of the CTHM (from left:) Assistant Dean Dr. Evangeline Timbang, Regent Rev. Fr. Ferdinand Bautista, O.P., and Dean Prof. Gezzez Giezi G. Granado, DCL

Organized by the UST College of Tourism and Hospitality Management, this year's 3rd Philippine International Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference (PITH-ReCon) brought together an international audience of academic institutions, educators, and young researchers to highlight the potential of tourism and hospitality as drivers of peace and stability. The conference was held on April 23, 2025 at the Albertus Magnus Building, with the theme, "Tourism and Hospitality: Drivers of Peace and Stability." This year's external conference focused on defining peace and how valuable it is to our world, to different cultures and humanity.

As the 3rd PITH-ReCon officially commenced, three distinguished speakers shared their invaluable insights on relevant topics. Rev. Fr. Reynor E. Munsayac, O.P. (Executive Vice President, Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan Campus) began with the Context of Tourism and Hospitality in Peace and Stability, followed by Ms. Rahima M. Solaiman, JD, SCL (Chief, Halal Division, Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos) who spoke about Halal Tourism: The Growth and Development of Halal Industry in the Philippines, and finally, PMAJ France Ramos (Public Information Officer, Philippine National Police) with his talk on Tourist Safety and Security in Tourist Destination, where he emphasized that tourist security is a national priority and that the PNP takes pride in safeguarding lives.

With 26 participating colleges and universities coming together to share their voices and visions, PITH-ReCon saw a total submission of 44 abstracts that showed an admirable commitment to exploring tourism and hospitality as agents of peace and stability.

Participants whose work showed academic excellence, creativity, and alignment with the theme, "Tourism and Hospitality: Drivers of Peace and Stability," were given distinctions to honor exceptional contributions in Tourism Management and Hospitality Management, at both the Professional and Undergraduate levels.

The next chapter begins with the 4th Philippine International Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, with the theme "Sustainable Transformation Through Tourism and Hospitality Development," which will be held on April 22 to 24, 2026. ■



Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs - Halal Division Chief Ms. Rahima M. Solaiman, JD, SCL



PNP Public Information Officer PMAJ France Ramos



## Baybado discusses synodality at int'l conference in Hawaii

UST Graduate School Theology program lead and Institute of Religion academic staff Prof. Pablito Baybado, Jr., Ph.D., presented the paper, “Academic Perspectives on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in Southeast Asia” at the International Conference on “Human Dignity and ASEAN: Pursuing Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in Southeast Asia,” held at Brigham Young University-Hawaii on April 22-25, 2025.

Organized by Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative Center, Brigham Young University (BYU) Hawaii, and the International Center for Law and Religion (ICLRS) at BYU Law School, the southeast asia conference aims to provide an opportunity for ASEAN Ministers, religious clergy, government officials, academic scholars, and civil society leaders to expand the understanding of new approaches to building peaceful and inclusive societies in Southeast Asia.

In his paper, Baybado explores synodality, a model of communal discernment, mutual listening, and participatory governance rooted in the Christian tradition, as a transformative approach toward building peaceful and inclusive societies in Southeast Asia. In a region marked by majority-minority relations and ethnic and religious identities in the context of political volatility, the principles of synodality offer a framework for dialogue, solidarity, and shared responsibility among multicultural and multireligious communities.

By emphasizing inclusivity, respect for human dignity, and active participation in social and political life, synodality transcends ethno-religious identity and social boundaries and provides valuable insights for interfaith collaboration, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. Drawing on both theological reflections and regional case studies, the paper argues that a synodal approach can contribute significantly to peacebuilding, inclusive governance, and the nurturing of pluralistic societies in Southeast Asia. ■



Prof. Baybado (fifth from left) along with his fellow presenters

## Mirasol of AB tackles lifelong learning, digital citizenship at Thai seminar on literacy

Prof. Rosalyn G. Mirasol, Ph.D., from the Faculty of Arts and Letters delivered a plenary talk on literacy, lifelong learning, and digital citizenship during the Thailand Literacy Seminar held by the Thailand Literacy Association on May 16, 2025 at the Bangkok Cultural and Art Center.

The talk focused on the importance of establishing a strong literacy foundation as a bridge to achieve lifelong learning skills. Moreover, the talk emphasizes the value of being a responsible member of the digital community, emphasizing the need to teach UNESCO’s key pillars of digital citizenship: digital etiquette, digital literacy, privacy and security, cyberbullying awareness, and digital footprint.

Dr. Mirasol is also a research associate at the UST - Research Center for Social Sciences and Education. ■



Dr. Mirasol



## CTRSE researchers share their studies at conferences in Poland, Romania

**P**rofessor Jove Jim S. Aguas, Ph.D., of the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts and Letters, and Assistant Professor Blaise D. Ringor, Ph.D., of the Institute of Religion—both are also adjunct professors of the Ecclesiastical Faculties and are faculty researchers of the Research Center for Theology, Religious Studies, and Ethics—served as keynote and plenary speakers at three major scholarly gatherings held in Poland and Romania in May 2025. These events—spanning themes of virtue, peace, and reconciliation—affirmed the enduring intellectual mission of the Catholic university within a world confronting wars and political divisions.

The first of these gatherings took place on May 19 at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, during the Karol Wojtyła Congress. The event drew philosophers, theologians, religious, and academics from multiple nations to reflect on the philosophical and moral legacy of the Polish pontiff.

In this conference, Prof. Aguas presented a keynote lecture titled *The Perfection of Power and Integration of the Person: St. Thomas Aquinas and Karol Wojtyła on Virtue*. In this comparative study, he demonstrated how Aquinas's metaphysical account of habitus and Wojtyła's personalist ethics converge upon a vision of the virtuous person as one whose powers are perfected through reason and grace. Moral character, he argued, is not formed by coercion or social convention, but by the disciplined development of excellence rooted in freedom.

Asst. Prof. Ringor followed with a paper titled *Divinus in Caro: Karol Wojtyła's Ontological Personalism In-Between Theomorphism and Technomorphism*. His lecture identified two errors in contemporary anthropology: the theological exaggeration that obscures human distinctiveness in the divine, and the technological reduction that empties the person of transcendence. Against both, Ringor proposed Wojtyła's vision of the acting person—rooted in the Incarnation—as a mediating path that upholds dignity without distortion. The human being, he insisted, is *divinus in caro*, an embodied subject called to freedom, responsibility, and participation in truth.

From Kraków, the two Thomasian scholars proceeded to Romania, where they participated in the 11th Religion, Knowledge, and Society Conference at Ovidius University of Constanța on May 23. With the theme *Global Tendencies, Local Realities: Redefining Peace in a Multipolar World*, the conference brought together intellectuals from diverse contexts to address the spiritual and ethical challenges of the twenty-first century. Alongside them are the notable experts in the field of Religion, Philosophy, and Theology such as Professor and Academician Mircea Dumitru, who is a former Minister of Education of Romania and is currently the Vice-President of Romanian Academy, Professor Daniela Dumitru, from Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Professor William Barbieri from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., USA, Professor Abdul Rashid from the University of Karachi, Pakistan, Professor Bryan Hall and Professor Erica Ferg from Regis University, USA, Father Pavol Dancak from the University of Presov, Slovakia, Professor Jérôme Grosclaude from the Université Clermont Auvergne, France, among others.

Aguas delivered a keynote lecture on *Global Solidarity: A Key Component in Attaining World Peace*. His presentation explored solidarity as both a social virtue and an ethical demand for justice. In an age marked by geopolitical fragmentation, systemic poverty, and invisible violence, he argued that peace cannot emerge from neutrality or detachment. Rather, it must be forged through the shared moral obligation to safeguard the dignity of every human person. Solidarity, Aguas maintained, is not only a political principle but a spiritual vocation.



Dr. Ringor



Prof. Aguas

Meanwhile, in his plenary lecture, *Whose God is in the City? Political Ontology, Religious Plurality, and the Indispensable Desire for Peace*, Ringor addressed the transcendental disconnection of the modern city. Recovering classical and Christian notions of the polis and the *civitas Dei*, he described the city not merely as a political arrangement but as a metaphysical form shaped by its orientation toward the divine. The loss of this orientation, he argued, has led to fragmentation and technocratic domination. Peace, he insisted, can only be restored when cities reclaim their identity as ordered expressions of communal life grounded in transcendent truth.

The final segment of their academic mission unfolded at the 11th Religion, Knowledge, and Society Seminar, also hosted by "Ovidius" University in Constanța, held at Suceava in Vatra Dornei, Romania from May 25 to 28. Centered on the theme *Pathways Towards Reconciliation: Philosophical and Theological Approaches*, the seminar invited participants to reflect on how religious, philosophical, and social traditions may contribute to healing divisions—both historical and contemporary.

Aguas contributed the paper *Reconciliation Through Dialogue: Philippine Experience*, which examined interreligious dialogue as a path toward national and regional harmony. Focusing on the Philippine context, he explored how respect, openness, and shared moral foundations can bridge long-standing cultural and religious divides. Dialogue, he emphasized, is not a matter of diplomacy but of conversion—an ethical process that restores trust by grounding difference in mutual recognition of human dignity. Ringor concluded the seminar with his lecture *"Remember Me When You Come Into Your Kingdom": Suffering, Repentance, and Mercy*. Drawing from Augustine and Aquinas, he described sin as a metaphysical disorder and reconciliation as the reestablishment of justice through grace. He examined suffering not as punishment alone but as an opportunity for purification and moral restoration. True reconciliation, he concluded, occurs not through legal resolution but through the embrace of mercy and the restoration of love's proper order.

For the University of Santo Tomas, the participation of Aguas and Ringor in these international engagements reaffirms its identity as a Pontifical institution in communion with the Church's global intellectual mission. Their contribution reflects the vision of the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, which calls for "the urgent need for 'networking' between those institutions worldwide that cultivate and promote ecclesiastical studies," so that they may serve "the new stage of the Church's mission" (§4.d). ■



## Madrunio highlights potent role of language in crisis negotiation at 2nd Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista Lecture

**T**he Pioneer of Philippine Forensic Linguistics Prof. Marilu R. Madrunio, Ph.D., showcased the powerful role of language in resolving high-stakes situations during her lecture at the second installment of the Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista Lecture Series on May 17, 2025, at the UST Central Laboratory Auditorium.

Drawing on her research into the 2010 Manila hostage-taking incident, Madrunio detailed how language operates not merely as a medium of communication but as a strategic tool for de-escalation, persuasion, and conflict resolution. The Department of English professor and former Dean of the UST Graduate School and the Faculty of Arts and Letters unveiled the significance of pragmatics, discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics in understanding how meaning, emotion, and intent are negotiated in real time, especially in crisis situations.

The honoree, Ms. Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista, expressed warm reflections on her 18 years at the University, recalling her years both as a high school and college student, and later as a faculty member pursuing her master's degree. "This is, of course, a different place now and I am happy to see new buildings and developments. But it is still the UST of my affections," she said.

Bautista praised Madrunio's contributions to the growing body of forensic linguistic research in the country and her success in mentoring a new generation of linguists.

Encouraging young scholars to seize the wealth of language around them, Bautista told current students to engage more actively with the research opportunities around them.

"There's so much language data around you. Please seize the moment," Bautista said.

She recounted her own experience as a field researcher in the 1970s through 1990s, interviewing radio talents, collecting soap opera scripts, and observing informal conversations, proving how rich language data has always been accessible to curious scholars.

This wealth of knowledge, she stressed, is even more within reach today through digital databases and real-time recordings, placing the next generation of linguists in a position to innovate and lead.

Also present at the event was Prof. Shirley Dita, Ph.D., a linguist and faculty member at De La Salle University (DLSU), who was acknowledged for her key role in establishing the lecture series. Dr. Ariane Borlongan, who delivered the series' inaugural talk and is likewise an academic protégé of Bautista, was also acknowledged for his pioneering work in migration linguistics, another growing area of local linguistic research.

In her closing remarks, UST English Language Studies program head Prof. Rachelle B. Lintao, Ph.D., echoed Madrunio's assertion that language is a transformative social tool.

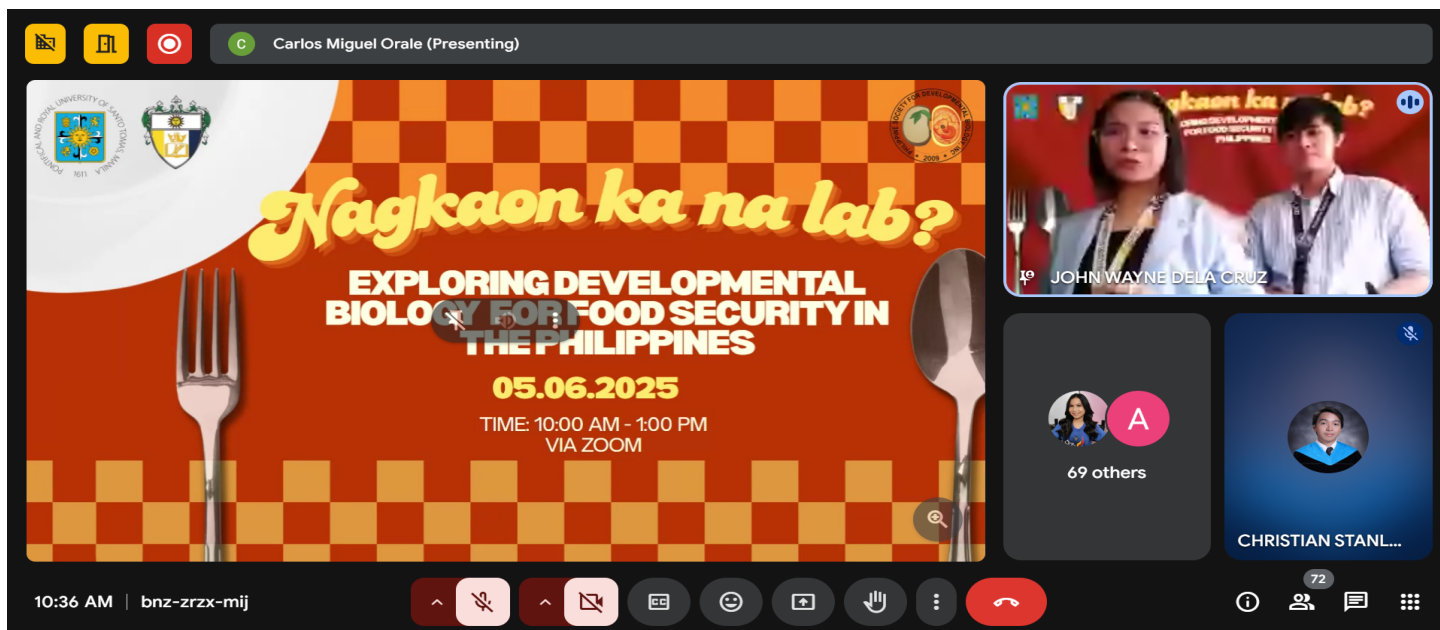
"We are not just here to study grammar or prepositions like in, on, and at...We are in the business of social change, of creating positive impact that improves people's lives," she said.

The lecture series, established in honor of Bautista's enduring contributions to Philippine English and linguistics, was jointly organized by the UST Department of English, DLSU Department of English and Applied Linguistics and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines. ■





## Solutions for food insecurity underscored in UST GS symposium



Webinar poster, with Ms. Sumagandang and Mr. Dela Cruz (upper right) as the masters of the ceremony.

University of Santo Tomas Graduate School (GS) students organized a webinar symposium that explored developmental biology for food security in the Philippines on May 6, 2025.

Philippine Society for Developmental Biology (PSDB) Vice President Dr. Erika Marie Bascos opened the program where she underscored the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in tackling food security. This was followed by a presentation by graduate students Mr. Von Cyrelle Daliva and Ms. Sarah Jewel de Leon who underscored the significance of integrating developmental biology into food security efforts in the Philippines. In addition, they also reported on findings from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations regarding the status of food insecurity in the country and presented several innovative solutions developed by Filipino scientists to address this pressing issue.

The featured speaker, Dr. Lerrie Anne Ipulan-Colet from the University of the Philippines Diliman, provided an engaging lecture on how advancements in developmental biology can inform sustainable agricultural practices and innovations in food production. In her presentation titled, “Cellular Agriculture: From Culture Plates to Dinner Plates,” Dr. Ipulan-Colet emphasized the significance of cellular agriculture, a groundbreaking approach to food production that involves creating food products directly from cells. She underscored the emerging role of in-vitro meat—also known as lab-grown, cultured, synthetic, or artificial meat—as a key innovation in advancing sustainable and cell-based food systems.

The event concluded with a message from PSDB President and UST GS faculty member Asst. Prof. Dino Tordesillas, Ph.D., who encouraged attendees to pursue research that connects scientific knowledge with real-world applications in food sustainability. ■



Mr. Daliva and Ms. de Leon's presentation



Dr. Ipulan-Colet presents her topic



## Modern Languages Department celebrates Timeless Tuesday with Italian, Spanish films

The UST Department of Modern Languages, through its Timeless Tuesday Series, held film screenings of notable Italian and Spanish films.

On May 6, 2025, the UST Department of Modern Languages, in partnership with the UST Office of Public Affairs and in collaboration with the Philippine-Italian Association & Società Dante Alighieri, hosted a film screening that featured three Italian films. Timeless Tuesday – Italia in Pellicola, held at the UST Central Laboratory Auditorium, was a full day of Italian cinema, allowing students and faculty to immerse themselves in the richness of Italian culture through the power of film.

The films featured during the whole-day viewing encompassed stories of friendship, self-discovery, and resilience. Luca, a heartwarming animated film set on the stunning Italian Riviera, explores themes of friendship, courage, and self-discovery. The classic story of Pinocchio was presented with a fresh take for its 2019 version. The classic tale of the wooden puppet was still filled with magical adventures that captured the audience's imagination. Finally, La Vita è Bella (Life is Beautiful) is a poignant story of love and resilience set against the backdrop of World War II, reminding viewers of the enduring strength of the human spirit.

For another session of Timeless Tuesday, the UST Library Conference Hall was filled with eager attendees on May 20, as students gathered for an afternoon of Spanish cinema.

This time, done in collaboration with the UST Miguel de Benavides Library and the Antonio Vivencio del Rosario UST Heritage Library, the UST Modern Languages did a screening of the Spanish film Diecisiete (Seventeen). The featured film captivated audiences with its heartfelt narrative centered on family, reconciliation, and second chances. The screening served not only as entertainment but also as an invitation to appreciate cultural narratives that enhance understanding of heritage and identity.

The Timeless Tuesday series by the UST Department of Modern Languages highlights the value of embracing diverse cultures through multimodal approaches. The events in the series are also an opportunity to foster collaborative efforts between offices and with other external organizations or institutions. These kinds of cultural activities encourage participants to engage deeply with the content presented and to appreciate the cultural richness they offer. ■



UST DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
In partnership with the  
UST Office of Public Affairs

In Collaboration with:  
Philippine Italian Association  
Società Dante Alighieri  
Manila

**TIMELESS TUESDAY:  
ITALIA IN  
PELLICOLA**

AN ITALIAN FILM SHOWING BY THE UST DEPARTMENT  
OF MODERN LANGUAGES

**MAY 06, 2025**  
UST CENTRAL LABORATORY AUDITORIUM, 8/F

OPENING PLENARY 10:00 AM  
FILM SHOWING 11:00 AM • 01:00 PM • 03:00 PM

SCAN TO PRE-REGISTER  
AND WIN EXCITING PRIZES



OPEN TO THOMASIANS ONLY  
FREE ADMISSION





## Officials of the Digital Education Council

Digital Education Council President Mr. Danny Bielik (sixth from left) and CEO Mr. Alessandro Di Lullo (fifth from left) with officials of the Office for Information and Communications Technology, led by UST Assistant to the Rector for ICT Asst. Prof. Jerralyn Padua (seventh from left) Acting Director Asst. Prof. April Joy M. Gascon (eighth from left), and CITED Director Asst. Prof. Ana Ruby Paez (second from left) were assisted by UST Office of Public Affairs Director Ms. Michaela Lagniton (ninth from left) in welcoming the esteemed guests on May 6, 2025



## Student Brothers from the Dominican Provinces of St. Albert the Great and St. Martin de Porres

Br. Bonaventure Paul-Bonham, OP and Br. David Hardy, OP from the Dominican Province of St. Albert the Great and Br. Martin Mary Bauer from the Dominican Province of St. Martin de Porres visited the University of Santo Tomas for discussions with different administrative units on May 26, 2025. They were welcomed by representatives from the UST Central Seminary and the Office of Public Affairs, led by its Director Ms. Michaela O. Lagniton, MA (fifth from left)





## Prof. Kung Lap Yan, Ph.D.

Prof. Kung Lap Yan, Ph.D. (center), a distinguished scholar from the Religious Studies Department and the Divinity School of Theology of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), is with Assoc. Prof. Philip Fuentes, Ph.D., SThD, (left) and Institute of Religion Assistant Director Prof. Allan Basas, SThD, on April 10, 2025.



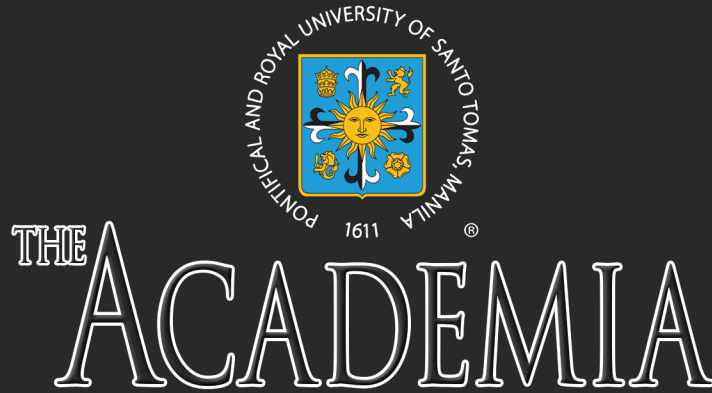
## Guests from the University of South Australia (UniSA)



## Ms. Sara Libera Zanetti

(UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)





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