



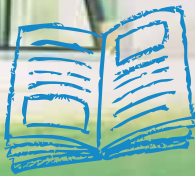
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education



dreams



study



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## Pursuing education despite the odds

These SM scholar alumni are now steps closer to their dreams

In the Philippines, many students face uncertain paths to higher education, especially those from vulnerable populations. Often, the

pressing need to support their families leads them to consider skipping college altogether and entering the workforce straight out of high school.

This could have been the story of Prince Mangahas and Queenie Alfonso—SM scholar alumni from Pampanga, whose lives took a turn through the SM Scholarship Program.



While excelling as a teacher, Prince Mangahas also steadily builds the life he always wanted for his own family.



**Hindi ako pinanghinaan ng loob kasi I am an SM Scholar. SM had it all for me. All I had to do was immerse myself in my studies. While the struggle was real, I was not battling alone. SM was there.**

– Prince Mangahas



SM Scholar alumnus Prince Mangahas

### Determined no matter the odds

Prince's struggling household nearly crushed his college dreams. He said he contemplated enrolling in a short vocational course instead of attending college, until he learned about the SM scholarship at Angeles University Foundation.

"I felt I needed to step up for the family and be the provider," he said. "I was really determined to get an education no matter the odds because as a kuya, gusto ko sanang sabay sabay kaming aangat," he shared.





Now starting her career at The SM Store, Queenie hopes to give a comfortable life to her family.



Queenie's mother continues to support her daughter as she now starts to chase her dreams.



Immediately after graduation, Queenie joined the Accounting Team of The SM Store in SM City Clark.

Education transformed Teacher Prince's life, becoming his gateway to uplift himself and his family. Motivated by the positive impact of education, he extends his influence beyond the classroom. He took leadership roles, conducted tutorial for additional income, and became a DepEd TV Math Teacher-Broadcaster during the pandemic, enabling him to share his skills to more students nationwide.

Prince sees education as a force for social good. "Through education, one becomes aware of the prevailing issues," he said. He now envisions himself teaching math and using his story to inspire students to

dream big and contribute to a better society. "Education plants a seed in someone's heart. Nourish it until it bears the fruit of compassion."

#### Following Tatang's footsteps

Like Prince, Kapampangan SM scholar Queenie faced financial hurdles in college, with her parents' income insufficient for her and her sibling's education.

Determined to break the poverty cycle in her family, Queenie seized the SM scholarship opportunity. She maximized this by working part-time at The SM Store during breaks, allowing her to concentrate on her Management Accounting studies while gaining early corporate exposure.

Armed with her skills after graduation, Queenie commenced her accounting career at The SM Store.

"Tatang once dreamed of fostering employment opportunities. Now, SM Supermalls and SM Stores are everywhere, transforming dreams into reality through job opportunities," she shared.

**Inspired by Tatang's vision, I also aspire to establish a business that generates jobs, with God's grace. As he said, "You have to have a dream big or small, then plan very well, work hard, and be very determined to achieve your goal."**

- Queenie Alfonso







## Inspiring Encounters: Getting to know the SM Scholars

By Joy Guevara and Anne Racoma

Meeting the SM scholars is a unique and inspiring experience. Each scholar contributes a distinct piece to a larger puzzle, offering us a deeper understanding of their individual journeys

and aspirations. Every day, we witness firsthand the transformative power of a scholarship. Our young scholars, brimming with potential, are given the chance to pursue their dreams. By

opening doors to opportunities they might never have had, we see that it's not just about financial support; it's about changing lives and creating brighter futures.



SM Foundation with the scholars from Cebu.

### First encounter: creating their own ripples of social good

In our office, we had the privilege of collaborating with an SM scholar alumna whom we fondly call Rom. Aside from handling health and wellness projects under SMFI, she recognized the need to support students and parents grappling with challenging math topics. Rom took proactive steps to create comprehensive online tutorial videos. Her initiative aimed not only to simplify complex concepts but also to foster confidence and understanding among learners facing educational obstacles.

Acts of genuine and effortless generosity, whether big or small, are natural among

our scholars. These stories highlight the true impact of the Scholarship program. It does not just provide education; it cultivates a culture of

compassion and leadership, molding future leaders and nation-builders committed to giving back and uplifting others.



SM Foundation employees host series of activities for scholars.





### Second encounter: building connections through activities

Our second encounter with our scholars occurred during events such as the General Assemblies tailored for them. These gatherings provided us with a platform to engage with alumni and scholars from diverse backgrounds, each with their own aspirations and stories.

It was truly heartwarming to witness their enthusiasm and camaraderie, and to hear about their dreams and goals. The experience filled us with

indescribable joy, seeing how some SM scholars have not only progressed in their careers but have also initiated positive changes in their communities.

For instance, Darmae, now a successful entrepreneur, has created employment opportunities within her community. Through her company's foundation, she extends scholarships to high school, college, and student-athletes, while also organizing the distribution of clean water to families affected by Typhoon Odette.

These engagement activities instill a sense of pride among SM scholars, reinforcing their belonging to the SM community—a network of support and encouragement. By uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds under a common ethos of learning, growth, and social responsibility, these events aim to enhance the personal and professional development of scholars while fostering a culture of spreading social good.

### Recent Encounter: Completing the Picture

In our latest engagement, we conducted interviews with prospective scholars, providing us with a comprehensive view of their journey with SM Foundation. This experience highlighted their background, the challenges they've conquered, and their aspirations. It's a reminder that every scholar has a unique story.

While their dreams vary, they share a common goal—to excel and positively impact their families and society. Education equips them with skills, knowledge, and opportunities for better employment, fostering critical thinking and societal contribution.



These encounters reinforce the importance of accessible education in empowering individuals and breaking the cycle of poverty. At SM Foundation, we are committed to nurturing scholars into confident leaders who can drive positive change in their communities.

Our interactions with scholars will continue to inspire us, reinforcing that education is not just for personal growth but can also serve as a catalyst for societal transformation.

*(with Carmen Linda Atayde, Eleanor Lansang, Gregorio Baclea-an Jr, Vaughn Lapid, Cygar De Lara, Lynne Gellio)*



## From scholars to professionals: SM Foundation shapes real-world ready scholars

The SM Foundation, the social good arm of the SM Group, continues to ramp up its scholarship program by setting up its scholars for success in their future careers.

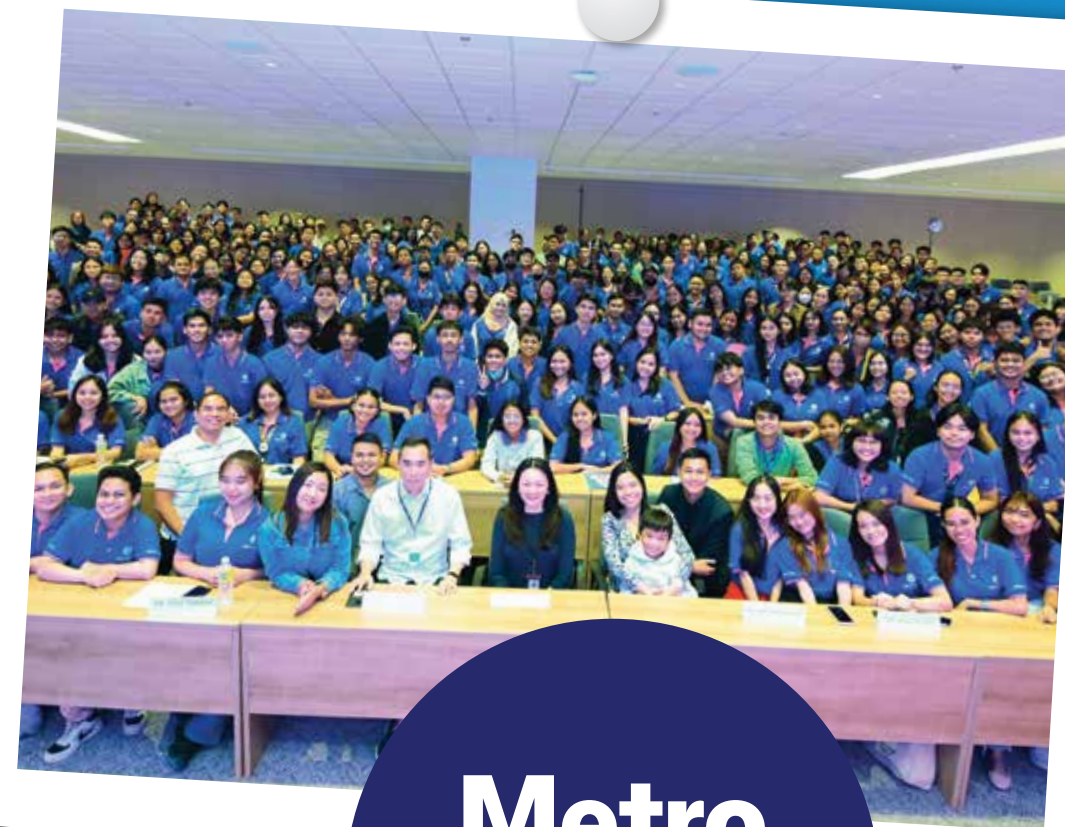
Partnering with SM Retail and SM Supermalls, the foundation hosted general assemblies in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Davao Region, South Luzon, and the provinces of Cebu and Iloilo.

At the assembly, the SM scholars further learned about program perks, including internship opportunities, exclusive job offers within SM (during holidays, breaks, and upon graduation), and valuable exposure to the professional world.

The said gatherings also aim to connect scholars with peers and mentors, allowing them to create valuable networks and gain insights from SM scholar-alumni who are now thriving in their respective fields.

This focus on practical experience equips scholars with the tools they need to land their dream careers after graduation.

SM Foundation's Scholarship Program has been empowering deserving Filipino youth from vulnerable communities by supporting their educational aspirations. By prioritizing a well-rounded student experience, the foundation moves beyond financial support, raising the next generation of Filipino leaders—scholars who are prepared to tackle real-world challenges and spread social good.



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Manila**









# Central Luzon







## Davao Region







**Cebu Province**







South Luzon







# Western Visayas



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