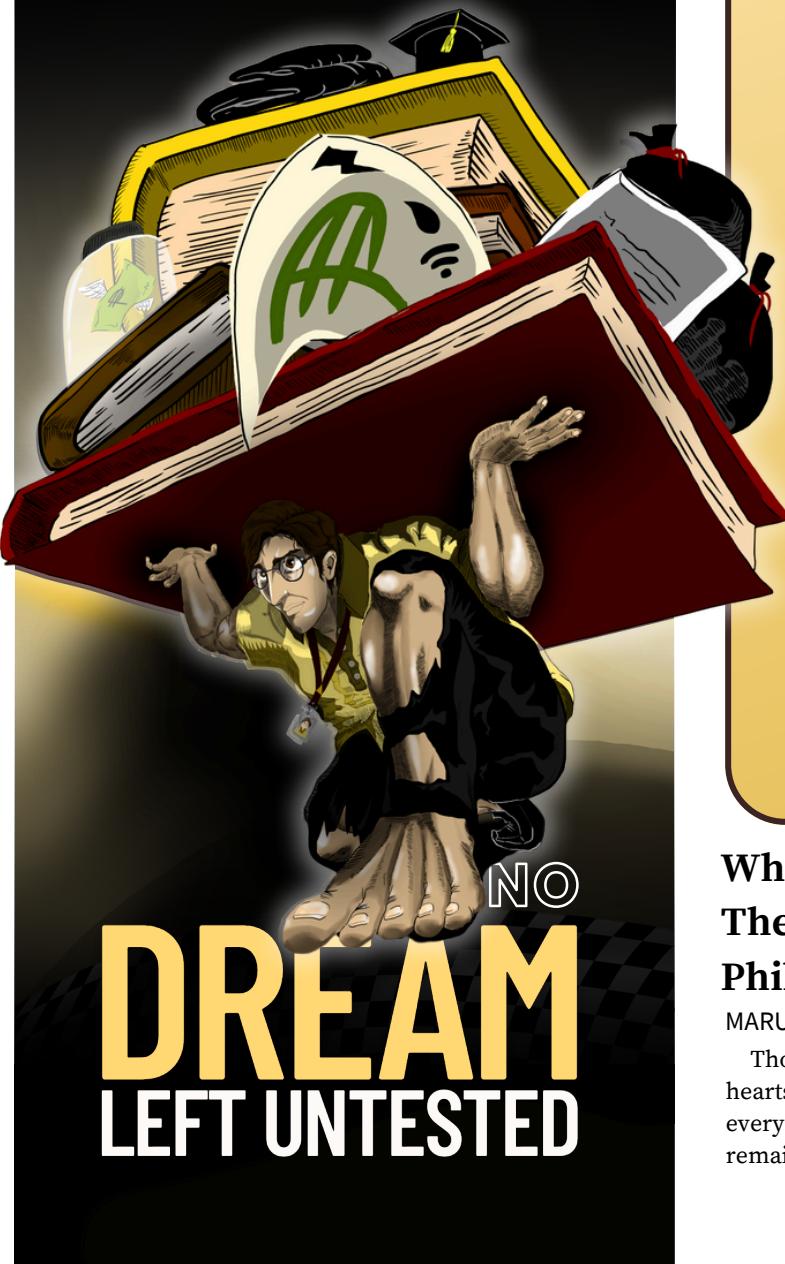




THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PUP-STC
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MAESTRO

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When Dreams Are Put to the Test: The Realities of LET Takers in the Philippines

MARUELLA ANNE LAR

Thousands of aspiring teachers with a dream in their hearts take the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) every year, but only a fraction make it through. The question remains: what exactly makes it so challenging?

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PSTO Kicks Off School Year with Brigada Eskwela 2024

ANNA REIGN T. AOALIN



The PSTO officially announced Brigada Eskwela 2024 via its Facebook page to prepare for the upcoming school year.

The Pre-Service Teachers Organization (PSTO) officers, together with several of its members, joined hands for Brigada Eskwela 2024 at the Cultural Building of Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Sto. Tomas Campus, August 29, 2024.

The cleanup drive, spearheaded by PSTO officers and supported by volunteers from all year levels, aimed to prepare classrooms and common areas for the return of students and faculty.

The initiative also served as a platform to foster camaraderie and leadership among future educators, particularly in welcoming the new semester ahead.

Participants of Brigada Eskwela were divided into smaller groups, each assigned to different areas of the Cultural Building to ensure a thorough and organized cleaning process.

Some groups focused on sweeping and scrubbing the auditorium, tackling chairs, stage areas, and hard-to-reach corners. Others were assigned to specific classrooms where they wiped down desks, rearranged furniture, and removed accumulated dust and clutter.

Meanwhile, another group took charge of restoring the hallways to a clean and welcoming state by sweeping the floors, disinfecting surfaces, and making sure every corner



PSTO members clean various areas of the Cultural Building during Brigada Eskwela 2024.

was spotless

This group-based approach not only made the cleanup efficient but also created opportunities for students from different year levels to interact.

The event served as an opportunity for many first-year students to feel included and establish early connections within the academic community.

The shared tasks naturally encouraged casual conversations, introductions, and teamwork, helping them feel welcomed and connected to the community they are about to join.

Through this initiative, PSTO reflected the values the institution seeks to instill in its future teachers, along with its ongoing commitment to building a clean, cooperative, and student-led learning environment.

To Ensure Quality in Teacher Education, **CHED RQAT Evaluates PUP-STC's BSEDEN Program for Compliance**

FRANCEL ROSE M. MALDIA

To ensure quality education standards, the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English (BSEDEN) program of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Sto. Tomas Branch (PUPSTC) was evaluated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Regional Quality Assurance Team (CHED-RQAT), November 27, 2024.

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The CHED-RQAT team, faculty members, and Branch Director Dr. Armando A. Torres pose for a photo opportunity at the end of the on-site evaluation.

The accreditation visit was led by Dr. Leonardo B. Dorado, a member of the RQAT, along with CHED Education Program Specialist Ms. Mila Almario-Magat.

The evaluators conducted a thorough document review and a quick inspection of campus facilities relevant to the BSEDEN program.

Their visit aimed to assess the program's compliance with CHED's minimum standards, which is a critical step for PUPSTC in its goal to obtain a Certificate of Program Compliance (COPC).

Following the one-day evaluation, the CHED-RQAT team provided several recommendations for the university to address.

By implementing these improvements, PUPSTC moves one step closer to securing the COPC for its BSEDEN program, ensuring it meets national benchmarks for delivering quality teacher education.

A Cosmic Celebration of Unity and Leadership Pre-Service Teachers Gather for PSTO General Assembly

CHAZLI ALVAREZ

Members of the Pre-Service Teachers' Organization (PSTO) came together for their annual General Assembly, held at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Sto. Tomas Campus' auditorium, October 19, 2024.

With the theme, "Cosmic: Uniting Hearts, Embracing Diversity, and Empowering Camaraderie Towards a Vibrant Future," the event brought together students from the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, and the Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education majors in Home Economics and in Information and Communication Technology.

Ms. Anna Marielle Ramos, English Program Coordinator, officially opened the assembly by congratulating students on the start of a new academic year and encouraging them to embrace opportunities that will bring them closer to completing their college degree.

She also expressed her excitement for fourth-year students preparing for their field study deployment, describing it as a critical step toward becoming professional educators.

Following the opening remarks, the assembly proceeded with discussions on the General Program of Activities (GPOA), the academic calendar, the organization's financial statement, and the amended PSTO bylaws, keeping members informed and promoting transparency within the organization.

After the formal segment, students who were grouped into seven teams named after zodiac signs, namely Taurus, Leo, Aquarius, Sagittarius, Gemini, Aries, and Virgo, participated in a series of activities designed to foster teamwork and creativity, including team building, flag making and modeling, and the much-anticipated yell competition.



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During the awarding ceremonies, Team Aquarius secured first place in the flag presentation; Teams Leo and Virgo tied for the championship in the team-building activity, while Team Gemini claimed the top spot in the yell competition.

Team Leo was ultimately declared the overall champion, as they demonstrated consistent performance across all events.

The awarding ceremony also recognized outstanding students from the second semester of A.Y. 2023–2024, alongside winners of various Teachers' Month activities.

The newly elected officers of the organization for the academic year 2024–2025 were also introduced and took their oath during the event.



Newly elected PSTO officers pledge their commitment to service during the A.Y. 2024-2025 oath-taking.

United for a Cause

PSTO Joins AFBA-Led Outreach for Typhoon Victims

EDSEL F. DE LEON



A donation drive for typhoon-affected families in Batangas was launched by AFBA through a Facebook announcement.

The Pre-Service Teachers' Organization (PSTO) of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines–Sto. Tomas Campus (PUP-STC) joined a collaborative outreach program initiated by the Association of Future Business Administrators (AFBA), November 15, 2024.

The initiative was also supported by Kapatiran ng Talino at Galing (KATAGA) and INDAK Batangan, and was organized in response to the devastation caused by Typhoon Kristine, which struck the country from October 21 to October 25, 2024.

The outreach took place in Barangay Poblacion 2, Tanauan City, Batangas, where the organizations distributed relief goods, gift packages, and organized engaging activities for children affected by the typhoon.



Volunteers from AFBA and PSTO deliver gift packages and lead engaging activities for children during the outreach in Tanauan City.

PSTO's active involvement was made possible through the participation of students from various sections for Academic Year 2024–2025, including BTLED ICT 1-1, BSEDEN 1-1, BTLED ICT 2-1, BTLED ICT 3-1, BSEDEN 3-1, BTLED HE 4-1, and BSEDEN 4-1.

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The success of the event was further strengthened by support from the Kiwanis Club of Our Lady of Mulawin Academy and a generous anonymous donor via GCash.

The PSTO extended its heartfelt appreciation to all who contributed to the cause.

In a reflection posted on social media, the PSTO emphasized the value of unity and compassion, highlighting how acts of collaborative kindness can generate positive impact for those who are in need.

Gifts of Learning and Hope PSTO Brings Joy to Children Through Christmas Outreach

VANESSA MAE M. TAGALOG

The Pre-Service Teachers' Organization (PSTO) spearheaded an outreach program themed "Write Your Dreams: School Essentials Drive" on December 21, 2024, at the covered court of Barangay 2, Santo Tomas City, Batangas, bringing genuine joy to children as the holiday season approached.

Despite the rainy weather, the memorable program began in the afternoon and was hosted by PSTO Vice President for Business and Finance, Mr. Mark Louie P. Obida, alongside PSTO Assistant Secretary Ms. Belle Iris T. Lucido.

According to Ms. Mica C. Anoyo, Vice President for Internal Affairs, the outreach included notebooks, pencils, coloring materials, and books—essentials for the children's learning.

"Thirty na bata ang target naming bigyan, pero lumabis sa Thirty yung mga bata, kaya we had to buy five more," she said.

The outreach program highlights the essence of giving during the Christmas season, especially in support of children's education.

Through the dedication of the PSTO officers in organizing the program, and with the help of every donor and other volunteers among PSTO members, the outreach was carried out successfully.

The outreach program does not only foster the spirit of Christmas but also the passion for inspiring children to dream bigger.

PSTO Welcomes Education Freshmen Through Orientation Program

ANNA REIGN T. AOALIN



PSTO announced the upcoming freshmen orientation through its official Facebook page

The Pre-Service Teachers' Organization (PSTO) held its Freshman Orientation for BTLED ICT 1-1 and BSED English 1-1 students at the auditorium of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Sto. Tomas Campus (PUP-STC), to formally introduce the organization and university guidelines to first-year education students, September 12, 2024.

The event opened with the registration of participants, followed by a warm welcome from the masters of ceremonies and a brief overview of the day's program.

The auditorium was filled with newly admitted students ready to begin their academic journey.

The discussion of the university handbook and the nature of PSTO as an academic organization served as a central part of the orientation.

Officers outlined institutional policies and expectations for students entering the education program.

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Participants were also introduced to the newly appointed program coordinator, Ms. Anna Marielle D. Ramos, a PUP-STC alumna who now leads the English program.

Her introduction served to familiarize the students with the administrative support available to them.

Meanwhile, PSTO officers facilitated several fun and educational games to engage the students during the event.

These activities aimed to build rapport among participants and reinforce their enthusiasm for the academic year ahead.

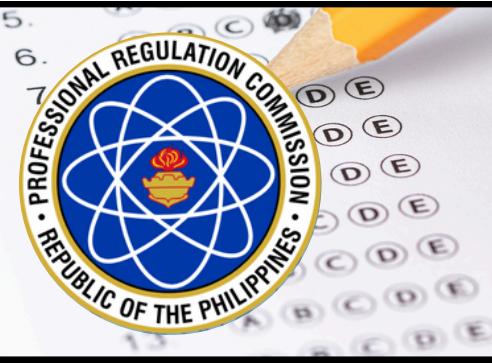
The orientation concluded with a group message of encouragement for the freshmen, emphasizing unity, responsibility, and academic excellence as they transition into their new role as future educators.



The PSTO and incoming freshmen come together for a photo opportunity to commemorate the orientation event

PUP-STC Achieves 77.78% Passing Rate in September 2024 LET

FRANCEL ROSE M. MALDIA



The Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Sto. Tomas Campus (PUP-STC) achieved a commendable 77.78% overall passing rate in the September 2024 Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), as released by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), December 13, 2024.

According to the official results published by PRC and confirmed by the Board Exams PH report, 21 out of 27 PUP-STC examinees passed the LET for the secondary level.

Among these, 19 were first-time takers, with a notable passing rate of 90.48%, while 2 out of 6 repeaters passed, reflecting a 33.33% success rate.

The examination, held nationwide on September 29, 2024, aimed to measure the readiness of aspiring teachers to enter the professional field.

The LET is known for its rigorous assessment of teaching competencies, educational foundations, and subject mastery.

PUP-STC's strong showing, especially among first-timers, demonstrates the effectiveness of its teacher education curriculum and the dedication of its faculty in preparing students for national licensure.

PUP Sto. Tomas' 77.78% performance significantly exceeds the national passing rate of 56.88%, reinforcing the campus's reputation as a hub for future educators.

With continued focus on academic quality and support for students, PUP-STC remains committed to producing competent and licensed teachers who are ready to serve schools across the country.

When Dreams Are Put to the Test...

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The LET is a professional board exam required for those who wish to teach in public and private schools in the Philippines, both at the elementary and secondary levels. It is administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) twice a year. To pass, an examinee must get at least 75% overall, with no score below 50% in any of the subject areas.

But beyond the numbers lies the real story.

For many, the road to LET is not just about reviewing; it is a journey filled with obstacles, both seen and unseen. From financial stress to emotional exhaustion, from the constant chase for good review materials to systemic delays, every aspiring teacher has a story to tell. This is especially true for those coming from far provinces, where access to quality resources is limited and simply getting to the exam venue already costs a lot.

Not Only on the Brain: Heavy on the Wallet

The reality is that review centers are not cheap. On top of that, there are exam fees, food, transportation, and even temporary lodging to consider. For those who are breadwinners or supporting themselves, it becomes even harder. Many LET takers juggle side jobs while trying to keep up with review sessions. Some even pause their review for a month just to earn a little more, in order to afford the next module.

Not Just a Test: A Mental Battle, Too

Many examinees, especially repeaters, carry the burden of expectations from their families and communities. Some have already spent years reviewing, failing, and trying again. The emotional toll is heavy—anxiety, self-doubt, and the fear of disappointment weigh them down even before the exam begins.

There are sleepless nights, silent cries, and moments of doubt. Yet, despite it all, they wake up the next day, open their notes, and try again.

System Delays, Unclear Guidelines, and the PRC Puzzle

Taking the LET also means navigating the often confusing system of PRC requirements. There are delays in processing, rescheduled exams, and strict document rules that can frustrate even the most patient applicants.

Some are heartbroken after preparing for months, only to find their names missing from the final list of examinees. Others travel miles to reach their assigned venue, only to be transferred again at the last minute. For those living far from testing centers, such as in Mindoro, Samar, or Bukidnon, the logistics alone feel like a second exam, but without the multiple choice.

Gaps Between College and the LET: A Question of Preparedness

Another common struggle is the misalignment between what is taught in college and what actually appears in the LET. Some subjects feel too compressed during undergraduate years; for others, the topics seem entirely new.

Even graduates who finished with honors often find the LET challenging, particularly the Professional Education and General Education portions. This leaves many reflecting on whether their preparation was truly sufficient.

Towards Better Support

Thankfully, there are ongoing efforts to support LET takers. Some review centers offer scholarships or discounts. Online communities share free modules, tips, and motivational posts. A few LGUs provide transportation or lodging for local residents taking the exam in cities.

But more must be done. Colleges and universities can work on better curriculum alignment. Government programs can provide subsidies or mental health support. And as a society, there is a need to stop looking down on repeaters and start recognizing them for who they are: fighters.

In the End, It's More Than a License

Passing the LET is more than receiving a card from the PRC. It is a symbol of sacrifice, perseverance, and a dream fulfilled.

Every sleepless night, every peso saved, every tear shed in silence—these are the markings of someone willing to fight for their calling. Because teaching is not just a job. It is a mission, and only those who endure the journey can change the world.



Connecting Minds and Future: The Freshmen Orientation Booth Experience

ANNA REIGN T. AOALIN



Incoming freshmen were officially welcomed by the PUP-STC Central Student Council during the 2024 Orientation Program. (Captured by *The Searcher*)

From the moment they stepped onto the campus grounds—wide-eyed, hopeful, and brimming with anticipation, this year's first-year students were greeted not just with open arms, but with a vibrant celebration of community: the annual Freshmen Orientation.

For these aspiring educators, it wasn't simply an introduction to campus life. It was their first real taste of belonging.

A Warm Welcome Beyond Expectations

"Isa sa mga pinaka-nagustuhan ko talaga ay yung booth na pinrepare para sa aming mga freshman," shared one student. "Ang daming interactive activities at giveaways, kaya nakaka-engganyo na sumali."

From fun games and creative booth designs to genuine smiles and friendly conversations, the booths prepared by upperclassmen created a lively and inviting atmosphere. Each booth wasn't just about entertainment; it mirrored the supportive culture within the program.

More Than Fun: Learning the Rules of the Game

Beyond the games and prizes, the booths played a vital role in orienting freshmen on school expectations.

Representatives clearly explained key rules and regulations, including common violations like cheating, cutting classes, and improper dress code. They also outlined consequences such as warnings, suspensions, or even expulsion.



The Dibujo Art Society booth welcomed freshmen with colorful displays and a glimpse into the artistic community of PUP STC

"Maganda na maaga pa lang, aware na kami sa mga dapat at hindi dapat gawin para maiwasan ang problema," said a freshman.

Unity at First Sight

For many, the booths became a bridge to new connections, even with people they had just met.

"Nagkakaroon ng pagkakaisa yung students, like 'Oh sige, dito tayo,' kahit hindi pa magkakakilala," one student recalled.

In just a few hours, the orientation booths broke the ice, built bonds, and planted seeds of unity and warmth, which are the core values pre-service teachers will carry with them throughout their journey.

More Than a Beginning

The event wasn't just about the start of academic life. It was about building connections, nurturing community, and instilling confidence in the future educators.

Where the Light Begins

MARIEL ELAINE BIONSON

In a hall bathed in candlelight and quiet anticipation, the Pinning and Candle Lighting Ceremony of pre-service teachers at PUP-Sto. Tomas Campus (PUP-STC) was more than a tradition. It was a powerful reflection of what it truly means to become a teacher.

For the pre-service teachers, it marked a significant milestone in their journey. It signaled not just the nearing end of their academic path, but the beginning of their role as future educators.

The moment was both emotional and affirming. It reminded them that teaching goes beyond lesson plans and blackboards; it is about guiding others, lighting the way, and showing up with heart.

The third Pinning and Candle Lighting Ceremony, held on December 12, 2024 at the PUP-STC gymnasium, carried the theme "A New Chapter: Brightening Horizons With the Light of Education." It ignited a sense of pride and purpose in the hearts of fourth-year students from the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English (BSEDEN) and the Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education major in Home Economics (BTLED-HE).

As a cherished tradition, the ceremony flowed with grace and significance. However, one moment stood out. Leanna Mae Tupaz, a student from BTLED-HE 4-1, was unable to walk that day and required a wheelchair and crutches. Yet, she was determined to be part of the procession. Despite the physical challenge, she chose to participate in the solemn ceremony, exemplifying her deep dedication to the teaching profession.

"Supposedly, hindi na siya makakalakad sa red carpet," her classmate shared. "Pero hindi pumayag ang mga kaklase namin na hindi niya ito maranasan."

During the ceremony, her classmates gently assisted her down the aisle, making sure she experienced the moment she had worked so hard for. It was not just an act of help. It was a quiet display of empathy, inclusion, and the very spirit of teaching.

As the ceremony continued, each pre-service teacher lit a candle. Each small flame represented a personal dream, a purpose, and a reason for choosing this path. The room was hushed, but the message was louder than any speech: the future of education burns brightly in their hands.

Even small moments of levity added warmth to the day. "Sana habaan pa 'yung candles sa susunod," one student joked. "Nasa unahan ako, at naubos agad 'yung kandila ko kahit hindi pa tapos 'yung lighting."

Still, the light did not go out—not in the room, and certainly not in their hearts.

And as the wax melted and the flames dimmed, one thing remained steady: the passion within these future educators. One student put it best: "Ramdam talaga namin na special kami."

That sense of being seen, celebrated, and supported will be the light they carry into every classroom they step into someday. One day, in classrooms of their own, they will become the light for others, just as they were lit with purpose that day.





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