



PREMIUM FUEL

THE ROAD TO 2021



CONTENTS

FUEL FOR PROGRESS

If you're not living under a rock sporting a quarantine beard and a-week-old body funk, then you're probably aware that Foundation University succeeded in keeping vast educational gates open for its students during this chaotic year. In fact, if you're reading this, then you're probably one of the resourceful students who strived to keep learning, continued enrollment, and made the difficult transition to going online through the FUEL Program. Or, you're a faculty member who has done summersaults of flexibility and innovation to make sure your students have what they need to progress, all the while donating a gargantuan amount of time.

This year has been one of sacrifice for everyone, make no mistake, but it has also been one that has united us in quite some unimaginable ways despite extensive social distancing. Instructors shoulder the weight of formulating virtual discussions, workshops, etc. together while students learn how to communicate online for class, research complex topics for better understanding, and become integrated in today's technologically advanced world. In the midst of this pandemic, everyone has learned to utilize several different platforms to stay connected. Students have exhibited a great deal of responsibility to maintain their studies, whether it's hunting for data or fighting the sluggishness that seeps in after so many days of isolation. To keep the flame of education burning brightly, departments have hosted guest speakers for their courses, created virtual labs, evaluated students' homemade videos, and far more to keep pupils on their toes. At the heart of things, the community of FU has

manifested opportunity and accomplishment out of the countless sacrifices made this year.

And that's how you build a brighter future.

In our previous issue, Civitas 360 presented personal testimonies from instructors and students alike of how their experience with the FUEL Program initially went. There were hardships, most of which stemmed from internet connection and time management issues, but there were emotional hurdles to get past too. From losing face-to-face connection to struggling with new subject matter, each person involved had their own problems to contend with. On the flipside, however, as there always is another side to the coin, FU witnessed its students excelling in ways it had never foreseen. Architectural students constructed both a beautiful and practical shelter for Combined Animal Rescue Endeavor (CARE) veterinarians and volunteers while adhering to strict Covid-19 safety protocols; Criminology students successfully landed positions in outstanding institutions, such as the Philippine Coast Guard; Hospitality Management students demonstrated their savory skills at cooking by filming their recipes; and the list goes on and on. Whatever the field, Foundation University is proud of its students, faculty, and administration for their resilience, their fortitude, and most importantly, their zeal to keep education going strong.

Check out our in-depth accounts below of how the FUEL Program has been proceeding for various departments from the Deans and their respective students.



BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION:

“During the first term, introducing the online distance program was met with a lot of resistance. It was expected. But left with no choice, we adapted to survive. Faculty embraced the transition but students expressed their doubts and challenges – the largest, of course, entailed interconnectivity problems. We made do – we had to. Teachers became more flexible and we all came to a balance. Both parties endured learning objectives.

In the 2nd term, it was much better despite the number of concerns, lack of equipment, etc. It’s funny how sometimes a “smart” phone isn’t actually smart. All of these variables were factored in during adjustment period. One thing to contend with too is that parents don’t always know the line between class hours and household chores. There are ethical practices that must be adhered to while in class along with expected behaviors. As the term continued, concerns became minimal; only those with high Covid-19 numbers that couldn’t go out due to quarantine measures for data were at risk for missing out in class. These students were

excellent at communicating with us what the circumstances were and our faculty responded by being more tolerant. Educators adjusted to the most appropriate mode of instruction, which then provided a modality best suited for teachers. More than ever, it is important to always inform students of what they need to know and let current situations become an opportunity to discover inner potential, develop self-efficacy skills, manage time, go independently – indeed, things that can be done even though a teacher isn’t there. And appreciate it!

The Business Administration Department explored a number of platforms this term as well as the newfound servicing of labs to go online. In Accounting, we introduced new online apps like Zero to students for their education. We’ve also explored other beneficial apps, such as Investigram and XM, especially since studies on investments and stock trading will proceed in the second semester. During pre-Covid times, our students had access to the Bloomberg Finance Database since the terminals are on campus, but now they have to wait until they’re allowed to return.

“This pandemic situation pushed our students to think outside the box, which sparked a lot of interest in e-commerce. Our students launched a Facebook Market in which they had to come up with name and its products or services. It encourages students to attempt selling what they can, earn an extra income, and gain experience with what to do when they’re financially down. It is currently 90% done and will launch in a matter of weeks. E-commerce promotes the development of entrepreneurial skills while engaging students in a productive way. It is a ground for learning values too. Spinning off the online market, our teachers will sit down with our students to demonstrate how to brand themselves for efficiency. Interestingly enough, our graduate school students prefer the distance approach for their courses than face-to-face. They have more independence, which is vital for an entrepreneur to master.

Additionally, our faculty have invited other teachers, guest speakers, and alumni from varying locations to share their knowledge. For example, we have a Metro Manila economist that will join us soon to present many ins and outs of the industry. In our MBA Program, Mr. Jo-Dann Darong lectures about his experience as a supervisor of the Economic Research and Statistics Division in the Philippines Securities and Exchange Commission. We also are partnered with fellow Mr. Tristan Nabong at the University of Stavanger in Norway for research purposes.

Every facet presents an opportunity for our students to take advantage of.

Finally, this situation has pushed us to be our greater selves, both faculty and students alike. I see it as an opportunity rather than a problem. It brings out things in you that you never knew you had. It’s important to adopt your skills, be able to change, and develop your ability to adapt. We need the capability to seamlessly adjust; it’s an advantage that will also serve the community better. These are the basic value we emphasize.”

~Charlotte Cariño

CRIMINOLOGY:

“Foundation University’s FUEL Program is quite challenging because it deviates from the common perception that learning is only in the classroom. We have had to change the mindset of our students in the Criminology Department because going online has been new for them. Our courses had started to implement Google but it wasn’t on a serious scale yet, until this year that is, and now it’s full-blown. We claim to be nourished with technology and while FU is, many students are financially challenged and don’t have what they need for easy access. Participation is passable.

But we make necessary adjustments. In the first term of online implementation, we usually had 2-3 virtual meetings per week but it turned out to be impractical. We created video recordings of discussion to induce participation because we had to take into account geographical and financial concerns. By going online, students can learn at their own pace and achieve the aims of our departments. For criminology, students should be trained emotionally and physically through aptitude training. They boost stamina as well as create a sense of responsibility, teamwork, and discipline. By going online, it has become difficult to streamline these core values because supervision of students is absolutely required; every cadet must have these values instilled and nurtured within.

For the Criminology Department, there are two phases that our cadets undergo. The first is physical while the second is a mixture of emotional and mental training. Physical courses entail learning military exercises, defense tactics, and MMA for the first and second year students; however, it would be impractical to demonstrate how to perform these maneuvers online and ask students to imitate them at home. Therefore, we have focused on the emotional and mental training for the FUEL

Program by administering workshops or lectures with an emphasis on core values. We amplify mental stability awareness. We have had several courses on applying required skills to show successful competency, such as learning how to conduct polygraph examinations.

What has been exceptional to see is the level of responsibility in our cadets. In the midst of this pandemic, many students have applied for jobs in addition to their studies to help their families. It is something to laud, and everyone has managed to apply their synchronized studies with their work schedules. Our faculty has been very flexible with the academic needs of our students, meeting with them regularly online and bolstering communication between cadets and safety advisors. While they cannot practice teamwork online in the old-fashioned sense, our students still have the opportunity to improve their communication skills. We may not be able to empirically evaluate the level of responsibility our cadets have risen to but we can certainly see its amplification.

We have had many success stories this year despite the pandemic. Many of our recent graduates and alumni have landed careers working for the Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine National Police, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Army, the Bureau of Jail Management, and Academe. We wish them the best of luck in the next chapter of their lives!

The Criminology Department is proud of its students that have not only bravely coped with this year’s circumstances, but gone above and beyond, guided by the core values we all hold dear.”

~Dean Bimboy Cueno

EDUCATION:

“Comparing the first and second terms, the second is going much more smoothly. Teachers and students have adjusted. We received complaints but were able to address the issues and challenges that came our way. Connectivity still poses the same problems, unfortunately. Though it may not be a perfect system, it’s a remedy to the situation at hand. For example, our PE students have been able to record videos at home for their activities. We even have one student based in the USA right now but she intends to come back, especially because she owns a school here in Dumaguete.

We’ll soon be allowed to have face-to-face courses again for our students that are 21 and older. This is vital because they cannot be deployed to practice until they are closely mentored and monitored. Hands on practice is undoubtedly pivotal in the development of an instructor. My suggestion is actually to reduce the age requirement, propose online modality but allow defenses and assignments for evaluation while observing health protocols.

One of the highlights of this year for the Education Department was placing 2nd and 3rd at the Region 7 Demonstration of Teaching for synchronous and asynchronous classes. They demonstrated their skills as engaging and adaptive instructors, making us very proud at FU. We have also been proud of our alumni that reported transferring to the public quadrant of teaching and are leading successful careers despite this year’s difficult circumstances.

When I was asked why the FUEL Program is working, I highlight the aptitude of the teachers. Our FUEL program consists of FUCE iStep, which stands for Foundation University College of Education interactive Student Teachers’ Enhancement Program. We managed to break down classes into even smaller classes to personalize subject matter and cater to different methods of learning; no two students learn in exactly in

the same way. In this fashion, we are able to hold more sessions and interact more so with our pupils. We even host evening classes for student teachers to strategize handling classes. By splitting 30 students into three groups of ten, we could teach them much more in-depth content over three days. Some of the content we have covered includes teaching face-to-face, instructing virtually, highlighting proper pronunciation, and implementing certain expressions.

What I’ve personally liked about going online is getting to know students on a different level. While I can’t meet them personally, I still communicate with them a great deal, and it makes all the difference. A pandemic cannot get in the way of connection and education if we don’t allow it to.”

~Dean Erlinda Calumpang

HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT:

“In the first term, there were lots of concerns and challenges but for the second term, the faculty of the Hospitality Management Department was able to prepare more thoroughly and the material was better tailored for its students. A major concern, and still is, continues to be one of internet connection and data usage. Many students aren’t able to attend Zoom meetings, but we have included Messenger to address this problem. Our faculty uses two platforms to provide smoother engagement with their students.

The department has been able to host major webinars for its students and invite industry practitioners while making do online. We have had several successful workshops on events management this term, which have included how to hold weddings and conferences despite restrictions. Mr. Michael Ramo, a skilled leader in Events Management, began the series by explaining key aspects of how to organize an event. Mr. Urich Calumpang brought his expertise on photography to the table for our students whereas Mr. Josivel Juanillo discussed flower arrangements and conceptual designs. Additionally, Ms. Pepper Limpoco conducted a successful session representing Makesense Asia Community. The Hospitality Management Department even had a webinar on personality development to help students

boost their self-esteem. Making sure our students feel confident in their field is something we take very seriously. We had two students that began to lack interest, a trending attitude as we endure this pandemic, but we addressed it with them immediately.

We are the only department that successfully transitioned all of its lab courses to be facilitated online. They discuss material, prepare for the exercise, and then record themselves for presentational purposes. For example, our students have to simulate what it’s like in a hotel, so they make beds properly in their own homes and send a recording to their instructor for evaluation. They also have become well-versed cooking in both Asian and Western styled cuisine. Our students make do with what they have, whether it’s an industrial-like set up or firewood for cooking at home. You can see an example of delicious chicken wings adobo style on our Facebook page that celebrated Buwan ng Wika by Carl Lawrence Sarito.

Despite the drawbacks of going online, we have been thrilled to see our students excel and enjoy the course material. We know they will continue to go far!”

~Dean RD Marie M. Delos Reyes

T H E R O A D T O 2 0 2 1



Kasadyaan

Retrospective



Foundation University celebrates two major events during its first semester for students: Founder's Day and the Kasadyaan Festival. The former takes place in July while the latter is in December, and it is certainly a doozy! Known as the "festival of festivals" Kasadyaan translates to "merrime`nt" as it serves to uphold national pride for cultural folklore. Myths and tales of old are brought to life in the form of lively dance and performance decorated with vivid costumes.

It is a feast for the eyes and soul of every spectator.



Over the course of three days, the festival offers several events, including the Miss Foundation University competition. Each department sends one representative to showcase their beautiful skills; they also host their own activities to give back to the community. The College of Nursing conducts free blood pressure testing while the College of Hospitality Management sells their scrumptious foods for sampling. Booths and stalls are set up in front of the church of Sophia to invite people to buy various products that students have created, and it serves as an excellent experience opportunity for students in the College of Business Administration. What audiences are most excited for

is, however, the show. Its proceeds go to various charity projects for the university and city. During pre-Covid times, a theme was given in August to allow for preparation time. Last year's theme consisted of festivals, which included the Day of the Dead and Mardi Gras, and every department performed something spectacular. It served and continues to serve as a chance for all to come together, both students and instructors alike, to celebrate their talents, talents that extend far beyond the classroom. It's not every day you get to see students studying computer science or criminology dance! This level of production demands a great deal of participation, but needless to say,



everybody is eager to get involved. What we love is to see just how creative students can get with the opportunity to let loose, a brief time to drop the serious rigor of studies in the name of singing and dancing. Pasagayan, aka street dancing, takes to the stage to display a story through the use of wild yet perfectly controlled movement. On the last day of the festival, alumni are allowed to join for one incredible finale. A moving choir makes its way down the street with a marching band, casting the streets in joyous, musical energy. There isn't a soul that doesn't feel merrily uplifted.



The first week of December is usually the craziest time of the year for Foundation University due to the Kasadyaan Festival, especially for the Culture and Arts Department. Unfortunately due to this year's pandemic, FU had to cancel all of its plans and social gathering but reassured, the Office for Culture and Arts is doing its best to conduct one online this upcoming January or February. "It's very difficult and the Creative Department is the busiest," Director Alexie Miraflor stated, "But the Kasadyaan Festival must be safe. Rehearsals are online but we need dancers to meet physically at some point, carefully. Christmas is our theme for this year's cultural aspect and everyone is involved, such as FPA [Foundation Preparatory Academy]. We're doing our best to put it all together but tech is limited on our students' part, like microphones, recording equipment, etc. The university has been so supportive with the arts though, and we are very grateful for it. We hope to see this celebration through!"

And see it through we shall. If Kasadyaan commemorates its merriment through the use of folklore, stories that have lasted through the ages, then we know we can continue our own merry stories despite the circumstances. Persistence and performance is woven into the patriotism of the Philippines and its people. Where there's a will, there's a way [to dance].



By: Gabriel Solana
BSBA-FM

In today's society, online classes are widely used in colleges to provide easy access to course materials and classroom discussions while maintaining safety for everyone due to the current pandemic.

As a student taking up BSBA-FM, it was really a challenge for me at first because I didn't have the resources I needed for my online classes. I was also not used to this type of learning program, so it was a large adjustment for me. Thankfully, the FUEL Program caters to the needs of its students and addresses their concerns quickly. The Fuel Program has allowed me to work independently and move at my own pace. I learned how to be self-disciplined and gained the ability to work well without supervision by completing my assignments and project deadlines in a timely fashion. Since I'm not physically going to class, I take part from the comfort of our own home knowing that it's a safe environment. Aside from that, I encounter learning interruptions every now and then due to poor internet connection and unannounced power interruptions, but I'm grateful that my teachers understand the situation and even take time to provide detailed learning material, be it through a video or a document file.

This learning experience for me has been unforgettable, one of which that has taught me how to be resilient in managing my own education. While I do miss going to school, seeing my friends, and talking to my teachers, I can only hope that they are safe and healthy during this global crisis.



By: Jomark Magbanua
BSED - Culture and Arts

I am presently enrolled as an Education student majoring in Culture and Arts.

Before I decided to enroll in Education, I had a lot of expectations that I had hoped to achieve while in the process of learning. A number of what I have dreamt of are slowly coming to reality, which I am very grateful for. All in all, the

course that I am taking has been a lot of fun and very fulfilling; I just want to cross my fingers and pray that my fears will not deter my desire to finish my studies. In my online classes, I have established friends that have become like a family to me. My teachers are very well equipped with experience and knowledge in the field, so much so that I feel they have effectively taught us this term.

This online class is truly difficult, especially with the aim of teaching how to impart essential subject matter and life lessons unto students. With our virtual way of learning now, a lot of challenges have shown up that I've had to face. First, I had to research topics that I struggled to understand in class because sometimes, I simply need further details than what a teacher relays to fully grasp the content. Another challenge has been internet connectivity. To cope with this, I have had to maintain a load balance that is enough for one week so that I can have several days to turn in my work in case the connection fails me one afternoon. I've realized that it's difficult for me to do things that require a lot of "process", especially when I am using only a phone. I do my best to make my output look as presentable as possible despite lacking a laptop and technological expertise.

Still, no matter what happens, I will do my very best, making a promise to myself to come out victorious.

By: Antonette Sasan
BSED - English

As I continue my course this year, I've been presented with another level of challenges based on the tasks given to me by the teachers. I've realized that as time goes by, the lessons are steadily getting more complex compared to last year's subject matter but I have absolutely no regrets in enrolling this school year because I know it will all be worth it in the end. If I can finish the course and overcome its challenges, it will surely mold me into a stronger person with the competencies I need to succeed. While taking the course online, the only struggle that I have encountered is that whenever we have a group activity, it is hard to get a hold of everyone, whether it's because of their availability, internet connection, or personal reasons. I do believe that group activities better off when done face-to-face so that we can share more ideas and work out tasks fairly as a team. For me, I have luckily only encountered connection problems when a blackout occurs.



By: Lenny Godinez
BSED - English

I'm taking up Bachelor of Education with a major in English, but due to the fact that I only have two subjects left, which are seminars and practice teaching, Ma'am Calisang suggested that I enroll in subjects from the BEED. At first, I thought that it would be a waste of time and money, but then I realized that it would be an advantage for me. Every subject that I have taken this semester have proved to be very useful for me. Even though they are meant for emerging elementary school teachers, I may choose to teach preschool someday. Who knows? These courses have provided additional knowledge that I may apply when planning out strategies and methods for future high school classes I will teach one day. Aside from giving me something useful to study during this pandemic, I have been given a glimpse of how preschool teachers conduct their students. And you know what? I think it was worth it – every little bit of learning helps.

How am I coping with the challenges I've encountered in my online classes? Since I only took three subjects this semester, I didn't feel the same level of frustration and difficulties that some of my course mates have experienced during their classes. There were times when I felt pressured to complete a task, especially when it required using Zoom and Google Classroom, but what I did to handle the stress was read Wattpad, watch Tiktoks, and take walks along the mountain. When I'm not in the mood to do an assigned task, my mindset is to do something else and then come back to it, to clear my head so to speak. Then I get everything in on time.



By: Rodelio Mante
BSED - English II

I think the course that I'm taking, which is Education, is an excellent choice for people who are passionate about pursuing and sharing knowledge as well as upholding positive values. This course prepares individuals to become significant members of society who shape the minds of the youth. It equips aspiring teachers with the right values and skillsets to provide quality education for their students. As someone who is motivated by my desire to learn and share what I've learned through teaching, I am confident that I am on the right path.

Currently, teaching is done through online classes due to the pandemic. This has positive and negative impacts to all the parties involved, especially for the students who struggle to get an internet connection. On the positive side, everyone gets to teach or learn at the comfort of their home. They can also save money from the fares they would have had to pay to commute; however, on the negative side of this situation, students who don't have a stable internet connection suffer the most. Some of us live in areas where there is little to no signal reception at all. Some of my classmates have to go to a plaza or an area away from their home just to get a signal so they can join the class.

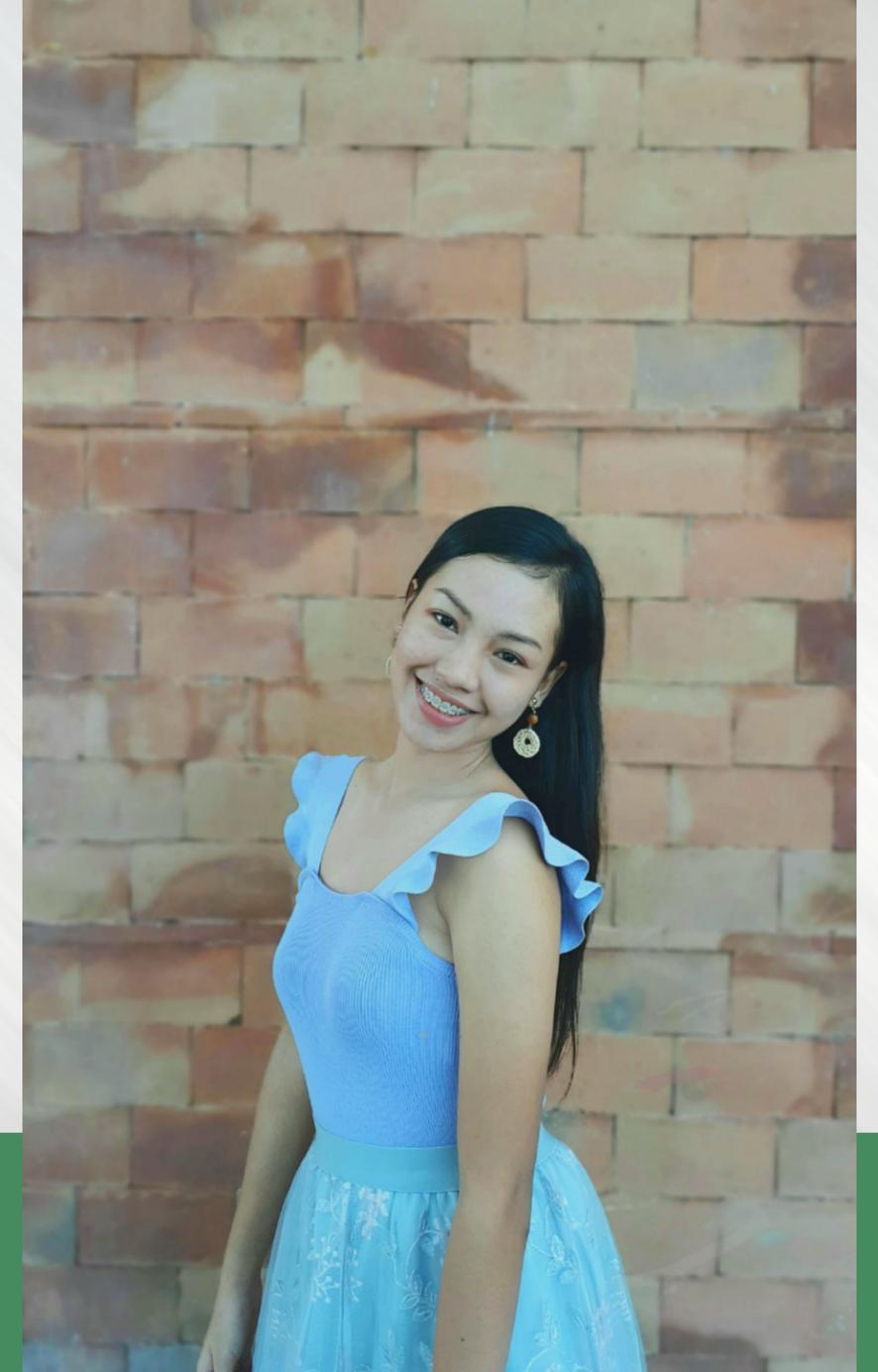
I, personally, have an unstable internet connection myself. I sometimes leave an ongoing class without notice because our internet is down. Consequently, I lose what was discussed or directions on activities I need to perform, but I'm lucky that my teachers and classmates are understanding of the situation. I ask my classmates or even send a private message to my teachers asking them to verify the details that I may have missed. Communication will always prove to be the best solution.



A GLIMPSE INTO ONLINE CRIMINOLOGY

by Nikki Evelyn Ortega

The worldwide educational system has endured an enormous crisis this year as we breathe together behind masks against one of the greatest menaces in our lifetime. As people respond to meet critical needs, it is important that educational needs are not neglected in consequence; there must be a guarantee that education is only partially interrupted and that continuing instruction through alternative learning schemes remain a top priority.



As a student of Foundation University, I personally understand how the FUEL program works, and being grounded in this moment of crisis, I've decided to recalibrate my techniques in learning. Alongside the Criminology Department, which currently serves as the backbone for my future career, we have had to engage in ultramodern ways to continue strengthening necessary and in-depth training for cadets. Regular exercise and physical activity are crucial for the preferred body physique among criminology cadets, and yes, we're consistent about it. Different tasks consisting of varying and challenging exercises will always be an integral part of our career; our instructors have assured us that our cardiovascular health will never be neglected throughout our duration at FU. I really like the idea of having to do certain exercises at home not only because it's a requirement, but because it's a great way to start the day! We usually have to record ourselves to demonstrate our physical accomplishments. Individual agility is still tested regardless of the social distancing between us; personal fitness does not come to a grinding halt because of a pandemic.

Crime scene investigations, on the other hand, are now introduced virtually. It's fantastic to see that a high number of cadets have adjusted to the platform well and comprehend the material; however, it's undeniable that everyone has different levels of understanding and particular areas may pose major issues, especially now. Nevertheless, we still manage to reach out to each other, which lessens the woes of learning and studying alone. We are presently using what's called a monitoring scheme, which is how our instructors maintain their flexibility during this tough time, but it also makes them vulnerable. This approach can be considered as a means of instilling discipline among the cadets while promoting competency and efficiency. A large aspect is the mentality to never resist

commands or orders from Seniors. Our instructors' dedication to core values demonstrate just how capable they can be in terms of handling a battalion, something I found truly interesting. I am on my way to mastering these disciplines myself.

As we are introduced to relevant and up to date education via online, I have personally experienced how difficult it is to learn while dealing with connectivity issues; it is an inevitable challenge that most students are facing right now. I realized, however, how important it is to do my part as a Criminology student, and that I have to make use of my resources wisely. From this revelation, I relayed my concerns to my instructors who fortunately found ways to address my predicament. It only goes to show how understanding and resourceful our instructors are; they adhere to consistency, keeping an open mind, and strengthening other possibilities of opportunity in this distance learning program.

While I've had numerous trials and setbacks in this new mode of education, I am unequivocally grateful to have instructors who generously offer so much of their time and effort to supporting their students' individual needs. The program itself is indeed a work in progress. It's a 'still-evolving strategy' that the FU community adopted in light of 2020's pandemic circumstances, and it's a strategy that will undoubtedly continue to change for the better. The university managed to prevent the deleterious repercussions of freezing education temporarily by making the speedy move to go online. The FUEL program has been quite a life-saving move for vulnerable students like me, not only because of the worries my parents expressed about continuing my career, but also because it always reminds me of a brighter future ahead.

THE RELENTLESS BATTLE OF A FUTURE EDUCATOR

by Niña Amato

Honing oneself to become the best educator they can be must embrace the task of molding students to also be at their best in the worst times, including this pandemic. It has been quite a challenge on my part as an Education student; the field of education itself is not as easy as some people might believe. Preparing for such arduous training demands constant bravery, resilience, and optimism. The moment one starts to think they are weak or frail is the time they cannot stand up for themselves, the time they cannot succeed, the time they may lose control of a classroom. It is easy to give up but it's important to stand and fight. Being an educator means facing this incessant battle. I do my best to never see failure as a fatal enemy but instead, an advocate for motivation and success. As I continue to grow, I receive the most preparation in education so that I can handle any situation that comes my way. Taking on this course is yet another example of not giving up. I want to test my limits and face what it's like to prepare myself, to be someone who can make

a difference for my future students. I may "fail" countless times in pursuing my necessary knowledge and experience, but giving up and leaving this course, one I love, is not in my vocabulary.

In times such as these that consist of a pandemic, attending online courses is far more tiring than face-to-face ones. You have to consider various factors in pursuing academics virtually, not only in terms of the external circumstances, such as having classes with noisy environments (e.g. howling dogs, crowing roosters, shouting neighbors, etc.), but also with one's intrinsic motivation. Fear, anxiety, and stress that has emerged from quarantine life these past eight months are demons we must contend with. What I've learned amongst my peers is that this stress and anxiety in numerous learners is the result of the deregulated use of many social media platforms; it stirred forth attitude of believing that they are alone in their battles of learning, that nobody can help them with their studies, that mental health has not only deteriorated but has been overlooked as well, suicide being the worst extent. But there are always silver linings; if we think about the big picture, restrained living has taught us how to become more efficient in time management, in our studies, and in our daily tasks. If we are indeed committed to learning, then I suppose that we can always find the time and effort to learn to the best of our abilities, with or without supervision. This austere battle is actually nowhere near as bad as we believe if we genuinely believe that we can do this, equipped with faith and God's guidance to persevere at all costs. Finding inspiration in everything I do, being optimistic, and fusing persistence have kept me going strong despite coming from unprivileged circumstances. Yes, I cried many times because I feel dreadful, empty, and futile on the occasion but when I think about my future students, my future profession of being an educator, my God's unending love coupled with the support I receive from friends and family who believe in my abilities, these factors are what keep me going through every unrelenting battle that I have had to face every day this year.





I N T H E M I D S T O F P A N D E M I C

2020 – the year that rings a bell to everyone. Each and every one of us has their own rich story to tell, from everyday life to the extreme of surviving the midst of a crisis. And yet it is an amalgamation of conflict, limitation, and self-preservation that can ignite the vast expression of what it means to be human. Its fundamental elements are ones we are all too familiar with.

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected people's lives in one way or another. The ordinary shifts to a luxury. Despite the severity of restrictions in several aspects, the experience became, and continues to be, quite an eye opener as to what is important. Interestingly enough, this year has been one in which we might yearn for a reset button, longing for what once was or to simply start over knowing what we know now; however, it is truly a reminder to keep searching for breakthroughs, for finding new ways to solve problems, for coming up with optimistic methods of coping with this year's drastic changes. It is a calling to remain open-minded when our doors must be closed.

Going online is certainly one approach to address the circumstances. Due to the “new normal” of social distancing, prohibiting gatherings, and constantly wearing masks, most activities are conducted from the comforts of our own home because it's the most practical solution. But any novel adjustment, whether it's large or small, can be terrifying or exciting, or even a mixture of both. Kicking apprehension to the curb, Foundation University elected to present its Lutas Film Festival for the seventh time – no crisis can stop the creativity ablaze in film!

Hosted by Foundation University, the Film Development Council of the Philippines, and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, its organizers held their breath and put their faith in the Internet's connectivity and stability. From September 17-19, 2020, the Lutas Film Festival conducted two successful Master Classes, film screenings galore, and a pitching session for screenplays. Filmmakers throughout Negros Oriental once again came together to cultivate and promote regional stories to enhance their craft.



Q: How did the film festival of Negros Oriental adapt during the global pandemic?

“I’ve been hesitant to go online because it’s never been done before. But I realized that what’s important now is to let the filmmakers know that we are still here for them despite the pandemic. It’s a trying time and most if not all filmmakers are affected. They can’t shoot outside because of the protocols; if they are able to, then they have to follow rules and regulations as well as submit necessary requirements before going about their craft. It wouldn’t be the same as before, but I wanted to let them know that Lutas is still here giving them platform to improve while on lockdown or quarantine. Thus, the Lutas Pitch. This pitching competition made them think and write their stories to try and win a grant that would mobilize them into producing a film for next year’s festival when everything goes back to normal.”
– Juliet Cuizon, Festival Director

Q: How was your participation during the Lutas VII?

“It’s the first time I attended a film festival online so I found it exciting. The change in the platform didn’t really matter because the energy of the Negros Oriental film community and their eagerness to learn from each other was still there. Generally, it was another milestone worth celebrating for Negros Oriental cinema.” - Kent Jugador

Q: Were you hesitant to join at first because it would be online?

“I was only hesitant about my internet connection and the little amount of preparation I had for the event. My connection turned out to be fine in the duration of the event and I was also able to write my concept as a script before the deadline. Nonetheless, I always wanted to join this year’s edition of Lutas regardless of whether it was digital or not because it’s something that I had missed last year.” – Kent Jugador



Q: Was it your first time joining a local film festival here in the Philippines?

“It was my first time joining a film festival in the Philippines, made even more special by the fact that it was local! I recently moved to Dumaguete this past February after visiting twice because it’s such an incredible place – the people, the sights, the arts! Everything is beautifully located right here. As an emerging filmmaker, partaking in the Lutas Film Festival was both an exciting and eye-opening experience. It’s been my only exposure to Filipino films thus far, so I have learned a great deal, plus, befriending the filmmakers here have made their pieces all the more worthwhile as I discover behind-the-scenes content through them.” – Danielle Ureta-Spontak



Q: How was the experience of the online film screening? What was your impression? What did you realize compared to the previous screenings before the pandemic?

“If I had to compare it to the previous screenings, we had a lot of time before, time to ask, time to listen; simply, it was very limited. Nevertheless, despite the pandemic, I looked to it as a new avenue for us filmmakers that we are flexible enough to adapt to this new environment. I realized how grateful I am to have that opportunity to meet well renowned people in the industry. The standards of film screening today does not define our craft in the future, whether it’s in movie theaters or online screenings, so we should create our own master pieces with the best that we can. In this time of pandemic, we make use of the time we have. We can showcase our films not just in our locality but worldwide through the power of connectivity.” – Geraldyn Acibron



Q: What was your expectation and what did you realize at the end of the festival?

“I expected to meet diverse filmmakers, meet fellow enthusiasts from Negros Oriental, and at the same time hear my loud heartbeat as I delivered my first film pitch. I learned three things from three great filmmakers. From Sir Ricky Lee, I was able to erase my doubt of not being a good writer because of my little experience. He reminded everyone that it’s innate in every person to tell a story. From Ms. Achinette, I learned that we shouldn’t be limited to the conventional way of telling stories and we should always provide fresher forms of presenting our films. Through Direk Vic’s critique of my pitch, I figured that I should have confidence in what I’m presenting. If it makes me happy, then that should be enough to convince others about the material.” – Kent Jugador

Q: How was your experience in pitching?

“The pitching experience was such a great stepping stone into the industry and what it’s like. I prepared a 16 page script about man in town that serves cotton candy. While the story is fabricated, it was inspired by his success and his love for the craft. It was a sweet treat interviewing him, creating a character eager to try his pink cotton candy along the boulevard, and then pitch it to Lutas’s judges. In the process, I realized how much I want to showcase the Philippines through film on an international level for my mom (she’s from Bay Bay, Leyte) and for how much I love our country. We discussed the story, its target audience, and my hopes for its fruition. My dream is to submit it to several international film festivals so people far and wide can see the wonder in Dumaguete.” – Danielle Ureta-Spontak

Q: What was the most memorable for you?

“The most memorable experience was finding out I’d won the screenplay competition! I was at a beach cleanup in Dauin with friends sorting trash and answering trivia questions on sustainability when I got the text message. I raced back home, perhaps at ungodly speeds, to partake in the final Lutas screening and express my deepest gratitude for the grant. It will be such a joyous process to bring ‘Cotton Candy Dreams’ to life and premiere it at the next festival.” – Danielle Ureta-Spontak



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From the presenters, sponsors, and organizers who took the initiative to motivate the spirit of arts and creativity as well as to the filmmakers who are passionate in honing their craft, we salute you! Indeed, no pandemic can stop us from telling our stories. What we all hope for next year is something our festival director has stated for us all, “The only thing I’ve been looking forward is for this pandemic to end so we can sit and watch the films of our regional filmmakers together on one screen.”

Fingers crossed. Wait for next year’s Lutas!

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