

# Proposal for College Scholarship Support: Investing in a Legacy of Learning and Service

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## Introduction

Our Scholarship Initiative, in partnership with the Self-Reliant Program founded by Fr. John Vien Nguyen, offers a transformative opportunity for students, primarily from the indigenous community (*katutubo*) in Culion comprised of Tagbanua, Cuyonon, and Calamians, to break the cycle of poverty through education and service. This program focuses on sponsoring scholars in fields that are essential for Culion's economy, such as agriculture, education, healthcare, and vocational trades, ensuring they can fill critical gaps and provide the services needed by the community. The program envisions a self-sustaining cycle of learning where each scholar, upon completing their studies, returns to Palawan to offer their expertise and services. To expand this legacy, scholars also commit to "pay it forward" by sponsoring two future scholars, and the future scholars themselves will each sponsor two more future scholars, ensuring that the program's impact continues to grow across generations.

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## Educational Challenges for the *Katutubo*

The *katutubo* (Tagbanua, Cuyonon, and Calamians) face significant educational challenges, with literacy rates below the national average. Most come from families where parents lack formal education. Many young people are unable to pursue higher education, reinforcing a cycle of poverty and limited community potential.

In Culion, educational access is constrained by the scarcity of local institutions and limited resources for tertiary education. For those who wish to continue their studies, students often rely on Palawan State University (PSU), located in Puerto Princesa, and Western Philippines University (WPU), with campuses in Aborlan and Puerto Princesa. While these state institutions offer free tuition under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, intense competition and limited capacity mean that thousands of qualified applicants are turned away each year—PSU alone sees about 15,000 applicants competing for only 2,000 available slots.

Even with the benefit of free tuition at state institutions, additional school fees and cost of living remain a substantial financial burden for most families in Culion, preventing many students from low-income backgrounds from accessing higher education and

perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Many families in Culion lack the financial means to support their children's education away from home. Just the travel expenses for taking the college entrance exams to schools outside the island is prohibitive for many.

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## College Bound Scholars for 2025

As we look ahead to the 2025–2026 academic year, four of our senior high school scholars are actively preparing to enter college. Hannah Mae Guimba and Niña Guimba have set their sights on nursing programs—Niña with the goal of becoming a dentist and Hannah aspiring to pursue medicine. Both have already taken the entrance exam at Palawan State University (PSU) and West Visayas State University in Iloilo City. They are now preparing for upcoming exams at Central Mindanao University in Bukidnon, Cagayan de Oro.

Larskeneth Villono and Jolina Estopin, currently Grade 12 students at Central Taytay Senior High School, are also preparing for college. Lars plans to pursue a degree in Agriculture, while Jolina will be entering the field of Education. Both students are preparing to take their college entrance exams at Western Philippines University (WPU) in Aborlan, Palawan.

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## Budget Summary

Traveling to take entrance exams alone is a financial strain for the families, as all universities are located outside Culion.

Round Trip Cost of Travel per Student	Cost (PHP)	Cost (US\$*)
Palawan State University (Puerto Princesa)	5,000	88
West Visayas State University (Iloilo City)	15,000	263
Central Mindanao State University (Bukidnon)	20,000	351
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PHP 40,000</b>	<b>\$702</b>

*\*Based on conversions rate of \$1 = PHP 57*

While tuition in state universities is free, the cost of pursuing a college degree is still a major burden. Students must cover school fees, supplies, uniforms, and living expenses such as food and lodging. The estimated annual cost per student is outlined below:

Expense Category	Annual Cost (PHP)	Annual Cost (US\$*)
Lodging and utilities	130,000	2,281
Food (PHP 200/day for basic meals)	75,000	1,316
School fees (registration, library, lab fees)	25,000	439
Transportation (daily public transit)	10,000	175
Uniforms and college supplies	20,000	351
Health, Dental, Optical	5,000	88
Travel to Culion (Christmas/summer breaks)	30,000	526
Miscellaneous	5,000	88
<b>Total Estimated Annual Cost Per Student</b>	<b>PHP 300,000</b>	<b>\$5,263</b>

\*Based on conversions rate of \$1 = PHP 57

## Request for Scholarship Support

The Scholarship Program is a life-changing opportunity for students in Culion who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our scholars, most of whom are *katutubo*, face challenges far beyond those of the average student. Raised in rural areas with little access to the educational tools many take for granted, these young people often come from families where formal education is a rarity. Even though state universities offer free tuition, the additional costs—school fees, uniforms, supplies, and living expenses—are usually too high for these families. Without extra funding, we risk losing the chance to help these deserving students reach their dreams.

## Conclusion

Join us on this transformative journey to change lives and empower the Culion community. When you support our college-bound students, you are investing in their education and in the future of an entire community. Your generosity will empower the next generation of leaders to serve, inspire, and innovate in their communities. Together, we can turn dreams into reality and build a lasting legacy of learning and service that will echo through generations.