

i.STAre (Inspiring Service Through Action, Resilience, and Empowerment)

Dr. Eugenio S. Guhao, Jr. & Dr. Jonrey Y. Torrevillas

Professional Schools

Email: umps@umindanao.edu.ph

SDG Focus

KEY POINTS



Purpose: Provides financial and holistic support to financially challenged Student Training Assistants (STAs), helping them remain in school, succeed academically, and complete their tertiary education.



Target Beneficiaries: Professional Schools' Student Training Assistants



Major Activities: Beneficiary identification and assessment, resource mobilization, financial assistance distribution, mentoring, and continuous monitoring of students' academic progress and well-being.



Key Partners: UM Professional Schools and its faculty members



Key Outcomes: The i.STAre Program has reduced financial barriers for Student Training Assistants, improved student retention and well-being, strengthened the University's culture of compassion and volunteerism, and advanced SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The i.STAre (Inspiring Service Through Action, Resilience, and Empowerment) Program is a community-driven educational support initiative of the University of Mindanao Professional Schools designed to assist financially challenged Student Training Assistants (STAs). While the University's STA Program offers students opportunities to continue their education, it provides support and additional financial assistance tailored to STA's specific and daily needs.

Launched in 2012 with free lunches and later enhanced in 2022 with cash assistance by the Professional Schools faculty, the program mobilizes faculty members and respective program coordinators to provide voluntary financial assistance and essential support to the STAs assigned to the Professional Schools. The initiative seeks to create a culture of shared responsibility, compassion, and bayanihan while ensuring that PS-assigned STAs remain enrolled and successfully complete their tertiary education.

The program primarily benefits Student Training Assistants who are still assigned to UM PS. Key activities include beneficiary identification and assessment, resource mobilization, distribution of financial support, mentoring, and continuous monitoring of student progress. Through collective action and institutional commitment, the project addresses barriers to educational access while promoting student well-being and academic persistence.

By strengthening educational opportunities for vulnerable students, the i.STAre program contributes to the University's mission of transformative education and advances the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals related to poverty, well-being, education, and reduced inequalities.

TANGIBLE OUTCOMES

Impact to the University. The i.STAre program has strengthened the University of Mindanao Professional Schools' commitment to student-centered support and social responsibility. The initiative

demonstrates the institution's dedication to inclusive education by extending assistance beyond traditional scholarship and work-study mechanisms. Through the active participation of Professional Schools program coordinators and faculty, the program has fostered a culture of compassion, volunteerism, and shared accountability for student success. The project has also enhanced stakeholder engagement within the university community. The program coordinators and faculty members have become active partners in supporting vulnerable students, reinforcing the University's values of service, excellence, and social relevance. The program serves as a model of collaborative intervention that complements existing student assistance programs while promoting institutional solidarity.

Impact to the Community/ Society. The most significant beneficiaries of the program are financially challenged Student Training Assistants who would otherwise struggle to meet educational and personal expenses. Assistance provided through the program has helped reduce financial stress, enabling students to focus more effectively on their academic responsibilities and personal development. The initiative contributes to social mobility by helping deserving students continue their education despite economic constraints. By preventing potential school discontinuities and encouraging persistence toward graduation, the program helps develop future professionals who can contribute meaningfully to their families, workplaces, and communities. The project also promotes the Filipino value of bayanihan, inspiring collective action among university personnel in addressing educational inequities. Furthermore, the program strengthens community trust in the University's commitment to social transformation by demonstrating practical and sustainable support for students in need.

Impact to SDGs. The i.STAre program directly contributes to achieving several Sustainable Development Goals:

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty)** is supported through the provision of financial assistance to Student Training Assistants from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. By helping students meet transportation, school-related, and daily living expenses, the program reduces the financial burden on beneficiaries and their families. This support enables

students to continue their education, improve their future employment prospects, and break the cycle of poverty by continuing access to higher education.

- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)** is advanced through the program's provision of free lunches and supplemental financial assistance that helps students meet their basic nutritional needs. By ensuring that beneficiaries have access to adequate food and daily sustenance, the initiative promotes better health, concentration, and academic performance, allowing students to participate more effectively in their studies and university responsibilities.
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)** is supported by reducing students' financial pressures. Financial stability lessens stress and anxiety commonly associated with educational requirements, enabling beneficiaries to maintain better mental and emotional well-being.
- **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** is advanced through increased access to educational opportunities and improved student retention. By addressing financial barriers, the program allows beneficiaries to continue their studies and pursue their academic goals with less worries on their financial positions.
- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)** is promoted by creating inclusive opportunities for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The initiative helps level the playing field by ensuring that educational attainment is not limited by financial capacity.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Through sustained support and stakeholder participation, the program demonstrates how localized educational interventions can generate meaningful contributions toward achieving global sustainability goals.