

# Life of a Summa Cum Laude: A Scholar's Narrative

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**Abstract** - This study features the contributing factors to the Latin honor success of 'Mr. Brain'. It aimed to: determine his motivation upon the completion of four years in formal studies; distinguish the people who influenced his career journey; identify his learning styles during academic learning; analyze the family orientation where he was nurtured and shaped up that influenced his school achievements; and describe his primary hobbies. Through biographical and portraiture research designs, the key subject of this study was chosen through one-on-one interview. He was selected for being the only Summa Cum Laude who graduated in one of the State Universities and Colleges in Central Visayas, Philippines for Batch 2015-2016; and ranked 4<sup>th</sup> Place in the national Licensure Examinations for Teachers (LET) in September 2016. A life of a Summa Cum Laude, represented by a coded name 'Mr. Brain,' characterized with a definite self-regulation: clear goal orientation and motivation; influences of his high school teacher; endearing childhood classmate; and the magical triumvirate of college professors contributed a great factor to his academic success. His visual and kinesthetic learning styles and his hobbies of playing computer games animated his character to become a successful person. Though, he was not born into a family, who graduated with honors, however, it did not deprive him to achieve the highest academic award given by the university, a proof that intelligence is not genetically inherited; but it is socially nurtured.

**Keywords:** *summa cum laude, academic success, biography, portraiture, narrative*

## INTRODUCTION

The award of excellence in the academe is attributed by a legacy left by the Roman civilization to most academic communities at present, as an insignia of distinction. This includes the wearing of black academic gowns called *toga*, the distribution of certificates called *diploma*, and the hanging of mementos called *medalla* to most deserving members of the graduating class known as the Medieval Latin Honors of being: a *Cum Laude* with Grade Weighted Average (GWA) from 1.75 to 1.51; a *Magna Cum Laude* with GWA from 1.50 to 1.26; and a *Summa Cum Laude* with GWA from 1.25 to 1.0. These three insignias comprise the entire graduation regalia of graduates who receive the prestigious Medieval Latin Honors, similar to the crowning of 'bacca lauri' or laurel berry leaves among the Romans who achieved an exemplary performance in farm harvest during the medieval times. Laurels indicate success and honors, and laurel berry leaves are abundant in the fields; an indication of human beings dependency with nature. This is where that their celebration of academic success is called *baccalaureate*, which means reaping the harvest in the fields by single men who are *bachelors*, upon which the present degrees are derived. Similarly, during the day of recognition or graduation of a bachelor's degree, graduates who reap the harvest of academic achievements, the academic honors are awarded with medals and diplomas, because it is impractical to use the laurel berry leaves anymore in a highly urbanized society, unlike the simplicity of rural agricultural farm before. This means 'the laurels remain; but the berries are gone,' because of the changing element of time and setting.

*Summa Cum Laude* is defined as the highest Latin honor of academic distinctions that is achieved only

by few and selected brilliant scholars in the academia. Yet, this remains a dream to some who can hardly achieve it due to some other factors such as: challenging mental ability, emotional preparation, socio-economic contexts, and psychological or behavioral tendencies. Many students on these days are aiming to be a Summa Cum Laude; however, a lot of challenges that impinge in pursuing such a dream because of: poverty, hectic time schedules, inner conflicts, emotional problems, and family relationships. These occur when socio-economic and geographic factors collide—a social trap that they can hardly break.

First, since these students are enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) in the country, not just, they are academically deserving; but, many cannot afford to enroll themselves in private colleges and universities because of poverty. Several of them are children of farmers, fishermen, vendors, stevedores, and cab or public utility vehicle (PUJ) drivers, who constitute no stable income. They end up having hectic time schedules; because they want to ‘meet both ends meet,’ by being working scholars and by working in part time jobs in the city’s fast-food-chains. Some of them, who are not strong and resilient to withstand adversities in city life because of lack of self-regulation, suffer inner conflicts and emotional problems. They are separated with their parents and families in distant provinces whom they cannot easily confide about their current situation. Because of misguidance, some of them become social climbers; escorts; commercial sex workers; others indulge in illicit sex, and become early unwed mothers. Eventually, their studies suffer and they become irregular. All these factors may affect their college academic life, and only few manage to become academically successful and become a Summa Cum Laude when they graduate.

In order to succeed, determination, diligence, and resiliency may vary from one student to another. To Brad Henry [1], *“Believe in yourself, and the rest will fall into place. Have faith in your own abilities, work hard and there is nothing you cannot accomplish.”* This statement is indicative to those individuals who are passionate about their craft. College students who wish to become academically successful strive hard to get the highest honors, as one of the passports in getting the best job waiting ahead of them in most companies, industries, and other institutions in the country and abroad. Though, the competition is quite tough; but, schools may play a vast influence in

nurturing their dreams by imparting new knowledge, molding to reach their dreams, and shaping to become better citizens in the future.

State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) in the Philippines are Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) funded by the government. These more than a hundred government HEIs are considered the “home” of government scholars who are brilliant and deserving. Once accepted in HEIs, they are considered scholars of the state. Aside from evaluating their standards of quality through accreditations and quality assurance, there is also the need to study their graduates [tracer studies on students’ development] more especially to those who excel academically during graduation, thus this study is intended.

There is not much study conducted on the success stories of honor graduates because of their limited number. One of the teacher-training institutions, under SUCs, in Central Visayas is granted with a university status for being a Center of Excellence in Education by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). This HEI has produced for the first time a Summa Cum Laude, after more than four decades of her higher education existence. This intellectual scholar is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education, with area of specialization in Social Studies. His degree has been carved by experts that create a niche of a culture of excellence in the realm of social sciences and professional education in higher education studies. He is a consistent honor student since elementary to high school and a consistent dean’s list since first year to fourth year in college. His life’s ‘significant others’ vouch his character and excellence, not only to excel in the academics; but, also in extracurricular activities where he has been affiliated, not only as a member; but, someone with leadership positions from elementary to college. As a student leader, he is trusted by the university administration to represent in national and international summits for student leaders in the country and abroad.

As observed by most students today, enrolling in higher education without a clear purpose in taking up a certain degree may hinder their learning growth toward their career path: resulting into fuzzy goals; lack of study interest; absenteeism; failing grades; and drop outs. This paper provides brief details of a student life that surpasses all his student life’s challenges and manages to have superb grades that guarantees him the prestigious university Latin Honor Award of being a Summa Cum Laude during his

graduation day. His success was attributed by several factors such as: psychological, emotional, and spiritual. In terms of the psychological factors, the human subject is observed as intellectually smart among his classmates, he is respectful, friendly, and sociable. As regards to the emotional factors, he is a buoyant person, smiling, calm, and emotionally stable inside and outside. Aside from being religious, he liberates his mind and soul—a sign of a spiritually delighted person. All these observed factors serve as framework in finding out the secrets of his academic success.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of Dogan, Totan and Sapmaz [2] concludes that “there is a positive relationship between psychological well-being, emotional self-efficacy and affect balance; and that psychological well-being and affect balance have positive effects on self-esteem and happiness, emotional self-efficacy has a positive effect on self-esteem and that self-esteem has a positive effect on happiness.” Their study shows a big influence on the self-regulation of being a Summa Cum Laude, because no intellectual development that takes place without emotional self-efficacy. Appraising the individual based on his or her mental acumen, while disregarding his or her emotionality is well-thought-out to be a blunder [3]. In brain-based learning, emotions are very critical to learning. Happy emotions produced by *endorphins* elicit learning; while sad emotions produced by *cortisol* impair learning [4]. This means that feelings support the brain to generate new concepts and responds to glitches, in Hakkak et al., as cited by AL-Adwan and Al-Khayat [3], which are essential in the learning process.

Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski, as cited by Hayers, mention that motivation’s expectancy theory postulates from apparent likelihood will produce a performance that ascertains esteemed consequences [5], which is dictated by an individual’s attainment beliefs by Albert Bandura; and the positive psychological well-being. Feeling good everyday makes everything possible in learning. There is no learning without intrinsic motivation. To Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski, “valence, expectancy, and instrumentality are three factors which influence one’s motivation [5].” They further expound that,

*“Valence involves an individual’s value of an expected outcome; expectancy is one’s belief in the likelihood that effort will lead to*

*performance; and instrumentality is the belief that performance will lead to desired rewards [5].”*

These three aforementioned factors are used as lenses in the study, as regards to “Mr. Brain” and his academic life. His desire to graduate and to become a licensed teacher is the valence; his co-curricular and extra-curricular participations are part of his expectancy; reaping the academic award of being a Summa Cum Laude in his batch is his instrumentality. To Locke & Latham, (as cited by Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski in Hayes), goal setting theory is premised on the idea that,

*“Individuals who set goals are more likely to perform at higher levels than individuals who do not [5].”*

This means that people do more and perform their job, if their objectives are stimulating and made explicit. Activities that set goals have been developed in retention intervention programs to help students in higher institutions to identify and overcome challenges in achieving educational achievement [5]. Vis-à-vis, AL-Adwan & Al-Khayat rejoin that the individual’s self-concepts about his/her own capabilities have a countless impact on his/her options, resolving problems, and tenacity in curbing challenges [3].

Zimmerman, in Magno [6] further characterizes “self-regulated students as having superior motivation, adaptive learning methods, and views their future optimistically.” This contextualizes learners who have high self-motivation. Origin behavior is a fundamental stimulating concept. To de Charms, “origin behavior in students leads to better academic achievement.” The nurturing behavior in family orientations affects the motivation of the child to excel academically [7]. Though, the connection between motivation and academic achievement has been well recognized [8]; but there is still the need to look into the level of motivation among graduates with high intellectual achievement. To Magno [6], “intrinsic motivation is the belief in incremental learning, high value placed on personal progress, and high efficacy for learning.” While, extrinsic motivation focuses on intellectual approaches that promote accomplishment and lessen disappointment [9]. The parents, teachers, models, and peers are what Vygotsky refers as the ‘More Knowledgeable Others’ [MKOs] that contribute learner’s extrinsic motivation. The individual learner is

left to imagine and visualize extrinsic factors that affect their beliefs, progress, and self-efficacy in learning.

Stipek and Weisz suggest that apparent control of behavior is one motivational factor that affects learners' academic performance [10]. This control of behavior is intertwined that may contribute to learner self-efficacy. For instance, when one knows the contrast of easy lessons from difficult lessons; the immediate perception is to prefer the easy and to give up the difficult. But, if one's perception challenges the mind to learn the difficult lessons, because intrinsically, he or she can do it; then, this motivation consequently improves academic achievement. Wolters conducts an investigation on the varying factors of inner motivation affect learners' stimulation, mental processes, and academic performance [11]. His investigation results nuance that it is possible to advance learners' academic performance by improving their motivational beliefs and practices.

Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski (as cited by Hayes) mention that Bandura's self-efficacy is the person's belief in his or her capability to perform actions essential to obtain exact attainment of performance [5]. Self-efficacy or self-regulation is an element of the learners' life choices, decisions, and actions that they follow. Learners participate in activities that they like, which they are competent to engage and elude those activities in which they feel incompetent. This is more evidential among high school and college students where they have more educational selections. The higher self-efficacy of students creates more self-regulation opportunities and mastery in memorization and understanding of information. It is established in research studies that beliefs in self-efficacy changes behavior and anticipates a high correlation of outcomes; and predicting an excellent behavior. This has prompted Graham and Weiner's conclusion that self-efficacy has confirmed to have a dependable predictor of behavioral outcomes than have any other theories, particularly in psychology and in education [12]. Students are engaged in meeting new life that has a vital role in education, which equips them in gaining new knowledge and skills, not just toward achieving academic goals; but also helping them to become a better person.

To Marsh et al., as cited by Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski in Hayes, academic self-concept embraces learners' belief of their capacity to perform competently in the academic field [5], which can be

both global and local. Komarraju et al (as cited by Desai) have found out that learner and teacher interface supports the enhancement of educational beliefs which affects the learning process [13]. When learners observe their teachers as reverent, amicable, and visible, they perceive to feel more confident about their academic competences and more educationally motivated. Learners who participate in friendly conversations with teachers generate better learning (Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski (as cited by Hayes) [5]. This happens when teachers exhibit a well-balance emotional health, with an open mind to support their students' high degree of self-regulation [3]. Dedicated teachers inculcating young minds with the love of learning stimulates the students' desire in learning new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values.

To Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski in Hayes, motivational orientations create impact to student academic performance in higher institutions and their desire to stay longer in the university [5]. Using Deci and Ryan's theory of motivational orientations, Barker examines the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among university students' flexibility to stressful situations, safety, and learning performance [14]. Stimulating actions are associated with lower levels of stress. The degree of motivation is associated with students' poor psychological adjustment in the university, which is caused by high levels of apparent stress and psychological discomforts while immersing the challenges of a university life [5]. A student with a heart of learning is always being motivated to do things wherein he or she can excel in his/her studies despite varying levels of stress and know how to effectively manage them. Well-motivated students excel on their studies no matter what hindrances may about to come. These hindrances may bring triumph in life and sets them up to achieve the next level of their life's goal. The more challenging the goal, the greater is the achievement of the reward.

To Peterson as cited by Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski, in Hayes, people who perceive optimistically as possible are more willing to exert efforts in achieving their ends [5]. Being optimistic has mental, affective, and stimulating components. In order to stay longer in college life, students adjust to demanding situations. Stress management and flexibility in handing new situations are one of the perceived abilities of higher education students to maintain retention in the university until the moment they graduate. Buoyancy, altruism, and high degree of optimism are concomitant in responding to different

stressors [5]. As college students get older, they begin to distinguish the importance of education in their lives. Success in life is achieved if learning is applied to realistic contexts. Proper guidance, with parents or guardians, helps students to succeed on their studies. Both positive and negative experiences in the school are used as a tool in achieving one's goal in life. The wisdom of the intellect makes a sage; and the wisdom of the will makes a saint [15]. This quote says that education must take into account all the foregoing considerations for the success of every individual.

Everything is nothing and useless without the will of knowledge that plays a vital role in expressing everything. It builds the idea of the 'will to life' that is fixated on the idea that there are purposes in every success. "To be coherent at all in the success of each individual, it is required to have a clear conception of how in principle, men and women can remove the contaminations of passion from the operation of their understanding, how they can perceive and comprehend God's world and themselves as these truly conceive of each individual as a responsible being, who is capable of taking responsibility for his or her own action [16]." Every individual should have the capability of weighing faith, will and knowledge for the moral failure of everyone does not imply by its own lost. Each individual has the identity to succeed and accomplish in life. In every victory that a person attains, it is based on how his or her capability to strive on and hit the mark, and not freely provided in a silver platter.

As to Shride, et al. [17], there are 6 keys learners' need to consider in order to reach academic success: (1) it is important for them to know how to organize or formulate a system to figure out the right direction; (2) they should have time management to keep track possible time duration in performing a certain activity; (3) they need to complete assignment thoroughly; (4) they need to have a priority; (5) they need concentration in order to focus on the achievement of the goals specially in academic field that they study; (6) they need motivation to boost their learning interest in school. To Benford and Gess-Newsome, students' academic success supports that experiences; study habits and regular class attendance affect academic achievement of certain learners [18]. Student achievers are inclined to enhance their studies through reading, joining in discussions in matters with interest; while average students are inclined in doing their assignment and in studying their notes. Vis-a-vis, Breakthrough Collaboration [BC] concludes that there is no fixed intelligence and no fixed individual

perceived concepts of one's capacity which directs one's self-efficacy [19]. This conclusion supports and reflects the academic life of 'Mr. Brain' in attaining his spectacular academic achievement.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study features the contributing factors to the Latin honor success of 'Mr. Brain'. It aimed to: determine his motivation upon the completion of a four year formal studies; distinguish the people who influenced him through his career journey; identify his learning styles during academic learning; analyze the family orientation where he was nurtured and shaped up, which affected his school achievements; and describe his primary hobbies.

### **METHODS**

#### **Research Design**

The study used the biographical and portraiture research designs, which looks into the factors behind the achievement of the Latin honor of 'Mr. Brain'. In qualitative research, Roberts, in Culic [20], defined biographical research as narrative of a certain human subject, this uses stories of individuals and other 'personal materials' to understand their life within its social context." Portraiture is defined as a vivid story that reflects meaning from the perspective of both the research subject and the researcher using in depth interviewing and observations [21]. 'Mr. Brain,' as the key subject of this study was chosen with sole criterion of being the only graduate who received the highest Latin Honor Award of being a Summa Cum Laude for batch 2016 in one of the state colleges in Central Visayas region, Philippines, and ranked 4<sup>th</sup> Place in the Licensure Examinations for Teachers (LET) given in September 2016. A formal invitation was done in order to solicit consent. He was subjected through one-on-one interview.

#### **Research Tools**

The interview guide was formulated and approved by three Social Science professors, who served as experts for validation. This guide was used during the formal interview. The conversation was recorded through a cellular phone. Using a laptop computer, the interview was then transcribed from Visayan dialect to English. Verbal data are analyzed and themes were illuminated. The unstructured questions in the interview guide preempted to produce open responses from the subject, so that the themes were anticipated; but not pre-planned before the study was conducted.

Themes were made to surface out based on the narrative accounts. Because the study was purely qualitative, no quantification was needed, the verbal data were sorted into clusters and themes were identified. Since, the local situation deprived us yet on the use of text mining software, because of no access; the study was assured with a careful and very thorough thematic analysis of verbatim data, by utilizing an axial coding system in the manual process. After the transcription, the interview responses were sorted and coded tediously. Since, the generation of data involved the use of human subject, ethical consideration was strictly followed. First, a Transmittal Letter was crafted and signed by the researchers, noted by the most senior faculty in the department, and was approved by the Dean of the College of Education, in order to conduct the study. Second, a formal Letter of Consent was sent to the human subject for his graciousness to accept the intention of the study, using one-on-one interview. Third, the data extrapolated on him were dealt with utmost confidentiality; his real identity was hidden with a coded pen-name, 'Mr. Brain.' Lastly, a token of gratitude was extended to him right after the interview.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Motivation founded with a Promise

Being a student, 'Mr. Brain' gives importance to education as he strives very hard, in order to get the highest academic honors, in order for his Alma Mater to become prouder. This notion of goal setting among academics is not a stand-alone concept. As per interview with 'Mr. Brain,' he 'states that a triumphant life with spectacular achievement does not result from chances; nor is determined by fate or good fortune but; rather through the perseverance in oneself and hard work.' He believes that "*Just do more and be more for God's greater glory,*" which he can link to someone whose achievement is as spectacular as his.

Yet, 'Mr. Brain' swears to himself to be a Cum Laude; however, through discipline, prayer, and self-believing, he surpasses his dream not as a Cum Laude, but a Suma Cum Laude. Looking deeply into the life of 'Mr. Brain,' there are so many factors that motivate him (e.g. people who surround him, his determination in achieving a certain goals and his beliefs). 'Mr. Brain' firmly confirms that the big portion of his motivation in achieving such success is the promise from a special person of his age, to be the top as she is, at the moment they would graduate in college. This

person is one of his life's important significant others—a lady who beats his heart the passion of loving, keeping the faith, and trusting to succeed academically.

In connection to his motivation in achieving his academic success, Linnenbrink and Pintrich [8] imply that motivation includes the individual's principle to achieve their goals at specific time; attributions to explain individual behavior and his or her course of events; intrinsic motivation that defines as an action or behavior; and achievement goals, which direct into competence-based aims. As to Garcia and Garcia [22], "believing in our dreams by pursuing it with passion and discipline, such dreams may become attainable." Barker [14] stresses out that motivation is a procedure; an inborn trait or something that is nurtured in a social environment, which flicker the attainment of one's goal; the promise of future benefits that lures a person on like a carrot on a stick or the persistence, determination and focus that enable a person to see a task through to the end. Based on the implication mentioned regarding motivation, there is only one thing that 'Mr. Brain' has achieved his academic success—i.e. his motivational approach, which is repeatedly mentioned by some authors—the beliefs and determination toward certain goals. These are inspired by some individuals, family members, relatives, and friends, whom he considered as his trusted significant others in the family, school, and the community.

### His Social Influence

"You are who you are today as a result of an incredible array of circumstances, coincidences, and events that have shaped your life over time" [23]. Being influenced by others, an individual is molded to become either a 'cancer to the society' or 'a medicine that cures society's disease.' Motivation takes place when a person is motivated by someone. When a person is motivated, he or she does the best to impress or to give pride to his or her benefactor and to the large extent the society where he or she belongs.

### Academic Success Influenced by a Favorite High School Teacher

'Mr. Brain' is being influenced by his teacher during his high school days. He wants his teacher to be proud of him in the future. In an interview, he said, "*Someday I will be a good social science teacher.*" With that, he strives hard to obtain good grades in College. He never fails to amuse his high school teacher. He wants to give pride and honor to his

school. With the guidance of his favorite high school teacher he graduates high school with flying colors. His dream never stops. He always wants to be the best that is why he studies very hard and always thinks his favorite high school teacher that someday he may return to his school and show the award of achievement he obtains in College. This is concurred by Magno & Lajom that students' self-regulation increases from high school to college [24]. Magno & Lajom [24] further say that "Filipino adolescents have more mastery in developing competency and gaining understanding when they see the consequences of their actions and those who structure the learning environment." This proves the significant roles of the teacher in the process of learning and how this individual creates a pleasant environment that promotes significant learning experiences.

### **His Academic Achievement Propelled with Charm and Admiration**

As 'Mr. Brain' reaches the stage of puberty, he starts liking someone. He notices this charming and intelligent classmate that influences him to strive hard. This lady happens to be the candidate of being a valedictorian in their class. That is why he promises himself to graduate in college with high honors. He remains consistent to his promise and becomes serious on his studies. His feeling for 'Miss Valedictorian' motivates him to study hard and strives just for someday to win her heart. He treats 'Miss Valedictorian' as his inspiration to go beyond what he thinks he can do. When he hears news that 'Miss Valedictorian' is running for a Suma Cum Laude, he is very happy and amazed. That news triggers him to aim the same honor. He then makes himself antisocial; but not in the sense that he does not have friends. Every time his classmates invite him to a party, he always declines because he knows that there is always a time for night life. He knows that it can never contribute something to his studies and indeed he is right. As time passes by, he graduates with a Suma Cum Laude, an indication of his dream to be like his adored classmate, 'Miss Valedictorian.'

### **Academic Achievement Shaped by a Magical Triumvirate of University Professors**

In his college years, he idolizes three professors in the university namely: Professors GML, RBI and GBP. He idolizes Professor GML because he believes that this professor knows everything. For him, he is like a walking dictionary, an almanac, and an encyclopedia. He said that Prof. GML is an effective

and efficient teacher. He is good in explaining and elaborating the topic. He never has boring discussions. Every time Prof. GML conducts a class, it is like his soul is very excited to hear something extra ordinary. With that, he always does his best to do his part as a student. He makes sure that every time Prof. GML gives an examination, he would make it perfect or, if not, at least to get a passing score. The greatest characteristic that he likes most of Prof. GML is his open mindedness. For him, it's like a greatest achievement to have attended Prof. GML's class where everyone is open to changes and possibilities with an open mind and heart. 'Mr. Brain' promises himself that when he becomes a teacher, he will be open-minded just like Prof. GML.

Prof. RBI is another professor that 'Mr. Brain' looks up to, for his being an excellent teacher. He can see the eyes of Prof. RBI's passion in teaching. He can see that Prof. RBI is a dedicated and a committed teacher. With that, he learns a lot from him and vows someday he will be following the shadow of Prof. RBI's teaching. He notices that despite of Prof. RBI's busy schedule, he is always ready for the battle inside the classroom. He is wondering if Prof. RBI also sleeps when the mere fact that he is busy reading and editing those research papers and stuff; but on the next day he is ready for his class, as if, he is not very preoccupied the previous routines. That is why he wants to be the next Prof. RBI and would push his students to go beyond their limits to achieve quality. Having been with Prof. RBI, in depth pedagogical knowledge in teaching and learning is very much assured.

The last profess Professor GBP. He really adores her sense of humor but not just a plain humor; but rather an intellectual humor. Prof. GBP conducts classes and never fails her class to crack intelligent jokes. 'Mr. Brain' thinks that the teacher needs to have a sense of humor in the classroom to animate the class. Another characteristic that he likes most of Prof. GBP is her being a direct to the point teacher. She always discusses directly to what is the point and not messing up around just to say something.

This triumvirate of university professors exhibits emotional health and motivates him to achieve what he would have wanted to reap when he graduated for a Suma Cum Laude last March 2016. With that, 'Mr. Brain' reminds himself that he would be an open minded, ready, and direct to the point teacher with a glimpse of intelligent sense of humor.

## **His Learning Style**

### ***Visual Learner Exudes Excellence***

'Mr. Brain' has a visual type of learning where he represents ideas into visual symbols. Mental imagery improves students' performance by helping them become a believer and get worthwhile practices that hurdle prospective barriers and assume a new rule in obtaining success. As a visual learner, 'Mr. Brain' exhibits a chic in imagining ideas to images to widen his apprehension in every point of discussions. 'Mr. Brain' simply has some drawings about the discussion and can learn easily by his drawing through his imagination. When seeing something, he draws often and more frequently, it examines a room of learning styles very differently than most other learners do. This molds the visual learning style of 'Mr. Brain.' The visual intelligence of 'Mr. Brain' is complemented by the previous study of Inocian and Lasala [25], where social science majors are extremely high in introspection where the visual intelligence is categorized. Looking into the self of being intrapersonal, existential, and visual is a manifestation of self-regulation in achieving academic success. After all, success is a journey not a destination. Thus, 'Mr. Brain' becomes a paragon for all students who are aiming for an academic achievement that he reaps.

### ***Kinesthetic Learner Radiates Excellence***

Believing that success depends on ability is dangerous because if students think they have either high or low ability, it is really dependent on their academic performance. Kinesthetic learning begins when learners initiate motor activities carry out physical, rather than engaging in lectures or listening to class demonstrations. 'Mr. Brain' is a learner that likes movement the way he wants to learn. He does not like listening to someone when he is learning. He is an example of a tactile learner. Sometimes when he reads an article he goes somewhere and walks along side. Because for him, when he keeps on moving it can boost fast his knowledge and generate his understanding. He is a kinesthetic type of learner that needs support and guidance in making sense of their learning style and importantly enables him to develop a shared learning language that can easily accessible in successful learning process. In a separate study, Inocian & Lasala [25] support the kinesthetic leaning style of 'Mr. Brain,' social studies majors are moderately kinesthetic which proves that they have high performance in both verbal and non-verbal

interactions. The visual and kinesthetic learning styles of 'Mr. Brain' make him academically successful.

## **His Family Background and School Achievements**

### ***Academic Excellence is nurtured by Self-determination and Social Convergences***

'Mr. Brain' lives in a specific village in Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines. Though, his natal origin is in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines, during the 9<sup>th</sup> day of October 1996. He is the eldest among the three siblings. He has one sister and a brother. His father works as a Human Resource Officer and his mother is a homemaker. Since grade school, 'Mr. Brain' has a good scholastic record as number one in school; top 7 in grade 2; top 1 in grade 1; top 3 in grade 4; top 1 in grade 5; top 2 in grade 6. During his high school days in a Science High School, he belongs to the top 20 in first year; top 4 in second year and third year; and top 9 in the fourth year. His scholastic achievements indicate his degree of self-regulation. Magno characterizes self-regulated learners as generally independent, able to regulate learning, maintain study focus, plan then study their lessons ahead of time in achieving high assessment scores, then use tactics, which recalls the previous lessons [6]. During his college years he is one of the members of Educators Club in his freshman years. From his sophomore years, he becomes the Supreme Student Government (SSG) representative; during his junior years, he becomes the SSG Governor and Vice-President of SSG during his senior years. Academically, he is a consistent dean's list in the College of Teacher Education.

Like a normal child, 'Mr. Brain' has his three primary hobbies such as: reading, travelling, and playing computer games.

### ***Academic Excellence is attributed by Reading***

To Gisler and Elberts, reading is one of the world's top popular pastimes. If someone makes use of reading as a hobby, he/she has a big chance to succeed [26]. In a separate study of Davis, Datulayta, Dacalos, Cordova, Clerigo, Canoy, and Inocian, reading yielded a great amount of learning success, [27]. Gisler and Elberts further expounds that when teens read more than just their classroom assignments, they generally do great in school [26]. 'Mr. Brain' develops a primary hobby in reading. He spends his free time in reading journals, magazines and historical books. There are five reasons why he reads. First, it



gives him new insights about different cultures, practices, and beliefs of a certain place. This makes him realize that individuals must be equally valued, treated, and respected. Second, it releases him from stressful condition. This means that reading makes his body feels better and even it restores his inner strength. Third, books lead him become more creative and absorbing knowledge. He discloses that stories in books stimulate his curiosity and intrigue him more. Books create a strong effect in changing the persons' emotions such as sadness, anger, confusion, happiness, and surprises. Lastly, he testifies that books provide reliable scientific and research-based information, which provide a great life's advantage. Thus, he becomes more knowledgeable, creative, and understanding because of his reading adventure—a hobby that he considers significant to the life of a professional.

### **Travelling Widens Academic Perspectives**

'Mr. Brain' loves to travel because travelling, for him, provides relaxation de-stress in daily student life. When he goes to a place like historical landmarks, resorts, and scenic spots it makes his mind and body calm. This implies that he needs relaxation of the body and the mind to regulate his sense of well-being to enhance his memory. 'Mr. Brain' also laments that travelling increases his knowledge and widens his perspective. To Bernier, travelling leads people to orient the mind on people's unique and rich cultural diversity [28]. This means that travelling can lead people to discover their value, essence, and usefulness of their lives. Thus, people who travel become inter-culturally more competent, more tolerant, and socially more flexible.

### **Playing Computer Games Promote his Analytical Skills**

Nowadays, access to computers has increased, and the number of young people playing games on computers has increased too. As a professional, 'Mr. Brain' plays computer games. There are many genres of games that he engages with like action, adventure, arcade, board, fighting, gambling, logic, reasoning, simulation, sports, and strategy. But among these, he only plays strategic action, arcade, and adventure games most often. These games give him significant information, improve his problem solving, and enhance critical thinking. This analytical skill of 'Mr. Brain' is supported by Inocian and Lasala that social studies majors have the highest double dominance left brain thinking [25]. Like them, 'Mr. Brain also is

realistic and displays common sense thinking, evident in playing computer games. To Loo [29],

*“Games enable students to put themselves in the shoes of a character or immerse themselves in a place or culture that they are learning about in the classroom. These types of interactive experiences get students more excited about the material and support long-term retention.”*

This implies that students who played computer games become more creative, flexible, attentive and logical. Consequently, the three hobbies of 'Mr. Brain' such as reading, travelling, and playing computer games produce more energy, relieves his stresses, allows him to show self-esteem and confidence, enhances his critical thinking and reading comprehension, and helps him achieve goals and attain success.

### **CONCLUSION**

A life of a Summa Cum Laude, represented by a coded name 'Mr. Brain', characterized with a definite self-regulation: clear goal orientation and motivation; influences of his high school teacher; endearing childhood classmate; and the magical triumvirate of college professors contributed a great factor to his academic success. His visual and kinesthetic learning styles and his hobbies of playing computer games animated his character to become a successful person. Though, he was not born into a family, who graduated with honors, however, it did not deprive him to achieve the highest academic award given by the university, a proof that intelligence is not genetically inherited; but it is socially and environmentally nurtured.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The educational community may be encouraged to conduct further researches on the attitudes of graduates with Latin Honors, tracing their success of their academic performance from how they are nurtured both by the family and the school institutions, and how they perform in their respective work stations. College faculty members may nurture their students' optimum potentials by recognizing their unique interests and diverse intelligences, using the role of a 'guide on the side,' rather than a 'sage on the stage.'

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