

De La Salle Araneta cuts commute and carbon footprint with Meralco EV shuttle service



Students of DLSAU now enjoy the convenience, comfort, and safety of a free ride in two eco-friendly electric vehicles that can take them from EDSA North to their Malabon campus.

“When we had our SWOT analysis, we found two weaknesses. First is the accessibility of the university. The second was visibility.”

This was the deduction from De La Salle Araneta University (DLSAU) President Dr. Bjorn Santos that Meralco's subsidiary eSakay electric vehicles (EVs) hope to remedy.

While De La Salle schools are one of the most popular educational institutions in the Philippines, DLSAU suffered from a case of invisibility due to its location in Malabon – the far-flung outskirts of northern Manila.

Established back in 1946 as the Araneta Institute of Agriculture in Bulacan, the university moved to Malabon in 1947 and was eventually integrated into the De La Salle system in 2002.

Like most schools, DLSAU sought to boost enrollment. But it was remote, virtually unknown, and unappealing to consider studying there. Rides are worsened, currently, by congestion from seemingly endless infrastructure buildup.

“Tatlong jeep, isang tricycle. Aalis ka ng bahay ng 6. Kung 7:30 yung class mo, you'll be here around 8,” bemoaned University Student Council (USC) President Robec Roxas. *“Three jeeps, one tricycle. You leave the house by 6. If your class is at 7:30, you'll be here around 8.”*

To resolve the problem, Dr. Santos and the USC decided to make the commute to the school more palatable.

“One way to address this issue is to have a shuttle service,” said Dr. Santos. And holding a Doctorate degree with a specialization in renewable energy, he requested an e-vehicles proposal from Meralco upon learning of eSakay.

“When we learned about Meralco's eSakay, it became an easy decision,” said Dr. Santos. “Meralco has been very helpful to us.”

The EVs would be an innovative yet green solution that DLSAU, a Catholic school, felt strongly for, as it abided by Pope Francis' *Laudato si'*, the Holy See's second encyclical which called for the “care of our common home.”

Seeing immediate benefits

DLSAU launched its electric vehicle shuttle services on October with two fully air-conditioned units – the first of its kind – running at 15 to 30 minute intervals from the Malabon campus to North EDSA from 6 am till 6 pm, with designated drop-off and pick-up points. The service is free for students, faculty, and staff, provided they show their identification cards.

The EVs have zero emissions and zero noise, and when powered with renewable energy sources such as solar, its carbon footprint nearly drops down to zero.

Not only have they trimmed the number of ride transfers for DLSAU commuters, *“sobrang safe pa, kasi siyempre ihahatid kami point-to-point,”* said Roxas. *“It's also safer, because we're accompanied from point-to-point.”*

Another plus: emblazoned with the school's logo, DLSAU EVs will also serve as advertisement on wheels, in the hope of bringing more visibility to a school that's now more accessible.

Joining an elite group

DLSAU joins a growing list of progressive campuses that have adopted the use of the revolutionary green means of conveyance. Among them is sister school De La Salle University Science and Technology Complex in Laguna, which also features Meralco's EV program.

DLSAU is signed up with eSakay for five years. Success has already prompted consideration for additional pick-up and drop-off areas in the Balintawak and the Muñoz area at the behest of other riders. And if demand warrants it, DLSAU may get more EVs.

Ma. Cecilia M. Domingo, Meralco Vice President and Head for Corporate Business Group, said she acknowledges the school's appreciation of electric vehicles in the theological sense but adds that, “this isn't limited to a Catholic calling. Meralco also heeds the call to adopt measures in sustainability as mandated by our government.”

“And as the country heads toward wider use of electric vehicles, Meralco will be ready to lend its expertise to help shape a cleaner future,” Domingo closed.

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- Dr. Bjorn Santos
President, De La Salle
Araneta University



DLSAU's Dr. Bjorn Santos and Meralco's Ma. Cecilia M. Domingo, together with other representatives from the school and the power utility, are in an EV to take in the school's sites.



From left, Meralco VP Domingo, DLSAU President Dr. Santos, and eSakay President & CEO Raymond Ravelo seal their five-year partnership at the formal launch of the school's EV program.