

# REYNALDO P. PEJA JR.

Assistant Professor I

Teacher and Researcher in Genetics and Molecular Biology

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## Professional Summary

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An academic professional with 7+ years of experience in higher education and research leadership. Currently serving as Assistant Professor I under the Department of Environmental Science, VSU Alangalang pursuing fields of genetics, molecular biology, bioinformatics, and peatland conservation. With experience in publishing research papers in peer-reviewed, SCOPUS-indexed journals, and establishing linkages with local and international partners. Seeking to be promoted to Assistant Professor II under the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics, to expand expertise in teaching and research in genetics, the molecular sciences, and biotechniques as applied in crop improvement, including but not limited to breeding for resistance, increased yield, and the modification of other agronomic traits.

## Key Qualifications

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1. **Teaching experience:** Designed and delivered 10+ lecture and laboratory classes including genetics, microbiology, organic chemistry and biochemistry, and biotechnology and society.
2. **Research and Extension Management:** Managed peatland research studies funded by the Forest Foundation Philippines (FFP) through the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR). Currently serving as the project leader of the peatland microbiology study funded by the VSU Internationalization program, and as the component leader of Project Forest ECHOES: Engaging Children on Environmental Sustainability conducted in partnership with TinkerHouse Inc., funded by the FFP.
3. **Publications and Research Presentations:** Authored three peer-reviewed publications in the fields of plant pathology, genetics, and the marine sciences. Presented research posters and delivered oral presentations at two national and two international conferences from 2023-2024.
4. **Collaborations:** Established memorandum of understanding and memorandum of agreement with Universiti Sains Malaysia and TinkerHouse Inc. for research and extension activities.
5. **Awards:** American Society for Microbiology (ASM) Bill and Melinda Gates Travel Award for attendance at the Microbe 2025 Conference in Los Angeles, California, USA; 2023 Young Investigator in Plant Pathology (YIPP Fellow awarded by De La Salle University ); 3rd Place Oral Presenter (11<sup>th</sup> DOST ASTHRDP Graduate Conference)

## Education

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**MSc in Genetics.** 2019-2023. University of the Philippines Los Baños.

DOST-SEI ASTHRDP Graduate Scholar

Thesis: Molecular characterization of *Neoscytalidium dimidiatum* in Philippine dragon fruits

**BS in Biology.** 2013-2017. University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban

*Cum Laude*, DOST-SEI R.A. 7687 Scholar

## Professional Experience

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### VSU Alangalang

**Assistant Professor I** at the Department of Environmental Science from 2024-present. Started as Instructor I from 2018-2023. Mentored eight undergraduate thesis students.

**Director for Research, Extension, and Innovation** from 2023-present. Spearhead campus research and development alignment to institutional goals and objectives, national thrusts, and UN Sustainable Goals.

### University of the Philippines Tacloban College

**Research Assistant**, Heavy Metal Analysis in Macroalgae and Seawater from Manicani Island, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, Philippines". Facilitated the procurement of laboratory equipment and reagents and performed sample collection, laboratory processing, and analyses of data in R.

## Research Leadership

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**(Ongoing) Project Leader**, "Project EsMaLL: Establishing the Microbial Life Profile of the Leyte Sab-a Basin Peatland in the Philippines". Funding by VSU-Internationalization Program (VSU-IP-2022-8). Collaborator: Dr. Lau Nyok Sean of the Centre for Chemical Biology, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

**(Ongoing) Study Leader**, "Forest ECHOES: Engaging Children on Environmental Sustainability." In partnership with TinkerHouse Inc., funded by Forest Foundation Philippines.

**Assistant Study Leader**, "Biodiversity Assessment of Selected Faunal Species in Leyte Sab-a Basin Peatland". August 2018 – September 2019. Funded by the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction. Results of this study can be accessed through this website: <http://portal.leyte-sab-a-peatland.com/TechnicalStudies.php>

**Field Supervisor**, "Citizens' Satisfaction Index in Leyte, Leyte". April 2019 – September 2019. Funded by the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Citizen's Satisfaction Index System, and Bureau of Local Government Supervision.

## Publications

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**Peja Jr, R.P.**, Duka, I.M.A., Manuel, M.C.C., Manalang, A.P. and Balendres, M.A.O., 2024. Low Genetic Variation Contrasts With Variable Morphotypes in *Neoscytalidium dimidiatum* From the Philippines and Their Aggressiveness to Dragon Fruit Species. *Journal of Phytopathology*, 172(5), p.e13382.

Corales-Ulta, O. G., **Peja, R. P.**, & Casas, E. V. (2019). Baseline study on the levels of heavy metals in seawater and macroalgae near an abandoned mine in Manicani, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, Philippines. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 149, 110549. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2019.110549>

**Peja R.P.**, Alcober J.P.G., Corales O.G. (2018). Levels of Nickel in *Sargassum Polycystum* (Fucales, Sargassaceae) and *Thalassia Hemprichii* (Alismatales, Hydrocharitaceae) from Manicani Island Guiuan, Eastern Samar, Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Natural Sciences*, 22(1):1-9.

## Professional Development

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**Oral Presenter.** 10th Asian Wetland Symposium (2024); 11th ASTHRDP Graduate Scholars' Conference (3<sup>rd</sup> Place Oral Presenter, Category 1 – Agricultural and Environmental Sciences)

**Poster Presenter.** 12th Annual International Conference on Environmental Science (ACES) (2024). Pest Management Council of the Philippines 55th Anniversary and Annual Scientific Conference (2023).

**Resource Speaker.** DENR Peatland Management Training (2025)

**Resource Speaker.** DepEd-Leyte Division Seminar Workshop on Research Ethics (2024).

**VLIR-UOS Citizen Science Workshops.** Cagayan de Oro and VSU (2023–2025).

**Metagenomics Training.** Universiti Sains Malaysia (2023). Philippine Genome Center (2023).

**Advanced Genomics Tools for Conservation of Marine Biodiversity.** Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia (2022).

## Affiliations and Eligibilities

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**Associate Member,** National Research Council of the Philippines (2023)

**Regular Member,** Phi Sigma Honor Society (Alpha Chi Chapter, University of the Philippines) (2023); Philippine Phytopathological Society (2023); Philippine Society for Microbiology (2023); The International Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, Chapter 045 (University of the Philippines) (2019);

**Career Service Professional,** Civil Service Eligibility (2016)

## References

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**Prof. dr. Mark Angelo O. Balendres**  
Department of Biology, College of Science  
De La Salle University, Manila  
[mark.angelo.balendres@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:mark.angelo.balendres@dlsu.edu.ph)

**Dr. Judith B. Jomadiao, PhD**  
Chancellor, Visayas State University –  
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**Professor Ivan Marcelo A. Duka**  
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