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MIXER: The networking mixer, held at Cars Plus in Maite, kicks off an "amazing three days" of the 2025 CTE Summit. Photos by Walter Ulloa/The Guam Daily Post



GUACTE: From left, Sam Mabini, founder of the Guam Association for Career and Technical Education; Eric Chong, treasurer; and Charlie Hermosa, president.

GuACTE Summit connects classroom to workplace, educators and industry leaders chart path forward

By **Walter Ulloa**
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A three-day Career and Technical Education (CTE) Summit brought together Guam educators and business leaders last week to strengthen connections and prepare students for the island's workforce needs. The Guam Association for Career and Technical Education (GuACTE) event featured networking, panel discussions and workshops focused on creating pathways for student success.

Charlie Hermosa, GuACTE's newly appointed president, described it as an "amazing three days," beginning with a networking mixer at Cars Plus,

followed by industry expert panels and concluding with educational workshops at John F. Kennedy High School.

"We really wanted to spark those discussions with the educators, counselors, all the teachers," Hermosa said, emphasizing the primary goal of connecting education and industry.

Engagement

The Thursday mixer was "standing room only" and "jam-packed," according to Anita Enriquez, president of the University of Guam. Guam Department of Education Deputy Superintendent Joe Sanchez highlighted the summit's



Joe Sanchez

purpose. "All of that is intended to bring our educators together with the business community, private sector, government sector," he said. He outlined the guiding questions: "What does the economy look like for Guam over the next 10, 15, 20 years? What skills will our students need to be successful in that economy?"

Tae Oh, Guam Chamber of Commerce board chairman, emphasized relevant education. "I remember being a student and feeling that some of what we learned in school wasn't really relevant to an actual career."

Oh stressed the industry's critical role. "The private sector is essen-

tial in providing feedback to educators, ensuring students acquire skills needed for both job placement and long-term career success."

Selina Ashland, Island Equipment general manager, shared her experience speaking with students. "I had an opportunity to speak to a group of young students, including seniors preparing to step into the real world - whether it's college or exploring other options." She said these interactions expose students to unfamiliar industries. "It was a great opportunity to introduce them to an industry they may not have known about."

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PANEL: Charlie Hermosa stands at the podium with panelists during the panel discussion at the UOG CLASS Lecture Hall in Mangilao on Feb. 28.



ATTENDEES: The lecture hall is full as attendees participate in the panel discussion of the 2025 CTE Summit at UOG in Mangilao on Feb. 28.



ENRIQUEZ: Anita Enriquez delivers opening remarks during the panel discussion at the UOG CLASS Lecture Hall in Mangilao on Feb. 28. *Walter Ulloa/The Guam Daily Post*



JONES: Roseanne Jones, economist and dean of the School of Business and Public Administration at UOG, delivers the keynote speech at the 2025 CTE Summit panel discussion at the UOG CLASS Lecture Hall on Feb. 28. *Walter Ulloa/The Guam Daily Post*

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Vision

Sam Mabini, GuACTE founder, shared the organization's journey, dating back to when she introduced the College and Career Readiness Act as a senator. The law was designed "to encourage schools to develop curriculum that intentionally prepares students for careers."

She founded the Guam chapter in 2015, now serving the Pacific region "from Palau all the way to American Samoa."

"Tonight's mixer was something I've always envisioned," Mabini said. "Thanks to the new leadership of Mr. Charlie Hermosa, Mr. Doug Turner and other new members, we were able to gain the support of the Guam Department of Education and expand the professional development we've done over the last 10 years."

Perspectives

The summit's final day featured over 30 workshop presentations at JFK High School, covering topics from maritime careers to AI in education and essential skills for an AI-driven economy.

Dr. Marco Naguib, a visiting radiation oncologist, praised the concept. "I think it's a brilliant idea to have teachers meet with professionals from the community, or as they call it, the



WORKSHOPS: Joe Sanchez, deputy superintendent at the Guam Department of Education, speaks at the 2025 CTE Summit workshop sessions at the John F. Kennedy High School campus on March 1. *Photo courtesy of Charlie Hermosa*

industry," he said. "It provides opportunities for teachers to think outside the box about how they can engage and inspire students."

Johnny Rosario, digital marketing manager at Klara M, emphasized networking benefits. "It's a great way to meet professionals we might not otherwise connect with," he said. "There's no other way to network with educators, marketing professionals and tech experts outside of that mixer on Guam."

Chloe Poblete, a kindergarten teacher at M.U. Lujan Elementary School, shared her takeaways. "I benefited most from meeting educators in higher education and seeing how they contribute to preparing students for the workforce. It gave me a better idea of how to prepare my elementary students for the future."

Considerations

Enriquez stressed education's economic impact during a panel discussion last Friday. "Any developed

jurisdiction, any developed economy, relies on an educated population."

Roseanne Jones, economist and dean of UOG's School of Business and Public Administration, highlighted changing trends during her keynote speech. "Just a few years ago, 71% of teens planned to attend a four-year college. Today, that number has dropped nationally to 51%. This isn't a small adjustment; it's a fundamental shift in how young people plan their career paths."

She cited the cost of education as a contributing factor. "The U.S. average CTE program total cost is about \$33,000, compared to over \$127,000 for a four-year degree," Jones said. "Families, parents and students are thinking differently about their career pathways and return on investment."

Innovation

Dylan Sablan, principal at Business and Technology Academy Charter School, explained their work-based learning approach. "At BTACS, students don't attend school on Fridays. Instead, they go into the community for internships."

He noted they are "seeking as many companies as possible willing to mentor students - not just about careers, but also about soft skills and professional demeanor."

Looking forward

At the summit's conclusion, Hermosa emphasized the need for continued momentum. "We committed to following up with teachers, educators and counselors within a couple of months," he said.

"We want to assess what programs have been implemented, what's working and what needs improvement. We're not going to let it sit. This is just the beginning."

The summit represents GuACTE's effort to create what Hermosa describes as an "ecosystem" where students are prepared for various career pathways while addressing Guam's workforce needs.

"A lot of businesses are looking for employees," Hermosa said. "Let's get them ready."



OKADA: Mary Okada, president of Guam Community College, delivers opening remarks at the workshop sessions of the 2025 CTE Summit at the John F. Kennedy High School campus in Tamuning on March 1. *Photo courtesy of Charlie Hermosa*



PROCLAMATION: The proclamation signing of 2025 CTE Month celebrates Guam ACTE's 10th anniversary. *Photo courtesy of Charlie Hermosa*