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Tracer Study of Graduates from Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Pharmacy, Criminology, Medical Technology, and Social Work of Luna Goco Colleges, Inc.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative tracer study aims to examine the career pathways, workplace experiences, and professional development of graduates of Luna Goco Colleges, Inc. from the Bachelor of Science programs in Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Pharmacy, Criminology, Medical Technology, and Social Work. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study will employ purposive maximum-variation sampling to include graduates with diverse licensure status, employment conditions, occupational alignment, work settings, locations, and years of professional experience. Data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The inquiry will focus on graduates' transition from college to licensure, employment, or further study; the relevance of their academic and practical preparation; barriers and enabling conditions affecting career progression; workplace learning; professional identity; and recommendations for institutional improvement. The proposed thematic framework covers licensure as both a gateway and pressure point, the uneven transition to stable employment, the importance of clinical and field experience, the influence of service and ethics on professional identity, the continuing need for workplace learning, and the value of sustained institutional support after graduation. Findings are expected to provide narrative evidence for curriculum enhancement, experiential-learning improvement, licensure preparation, career services, employer partnerships, alumni engagement, quality assurance, accreditation, and institutional planning. The study may also complement a quantitative graduate tracer survey by explaining how personal, institutional, and labor-market conditions shape graduates' professional pathways.

Keywords: graduate tracer study, career pathways, professional development, graduate employability, reflexive thematic analysis, Luna Goco Colleges

Introduction

Higher education is expected to prepare graduates not only to obtain employment but also to exercise professional judgment, continue learning, and contribute to their communities. In regulated fields, the transition from college to work is especially complex because graduation is followed by licensure, supervised practice, employer screening, and adjustment to institutional routines. The International Labour Organization (2022) emphasizes that young people's movement into decent work is shaped by both skills and labor-market conditions. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education's outcomes-based quality framework places evidence of graduate achievement and program relevance within institutional quality assurance (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2012).

Tracer studies respond to this need by following graduates after completion and documenting where they go, what work they perform, and how they evaluate their education. Most tracer studies use questionnaires because these efficiently estimate employment rate, job alignment, waiting time, and earnings. A qualitative design serves a different purpose. It investigates how graduates explain turning points, barriers, workplace learning, professional identity, and the meaning they assign to their college preparation. This depth is useful when an institution offers several programs whose graduates enter distinct professional systems but share the same institutional environment.

Luna Goco Colleges, Inc. offers programs that contribute to health care, public safety, justice, and social welfare. Nursing, radiologic technology, pharmacy, and medical technology graduates work in health systems that demand technical accuracy, patient safety, communication, and interprofessional cooperation. Criminology graduates may enter law enforcement, corrections, investigation, security, or related public service. Social work graduates engage individuals, families, groups, and communities while balancing legal mandates, ethical responsibilities, documentation, and resource constraints. Although these occupations differ, graduates may encounter common transition issues: preparing for licensure, obtaining a first position, accepting work outside the degree field, relocating, managing contractual employment, adapting to technology, and pursuing further credentials.

The World Health Organization (2020) identifies education, employment, deployment, retention, and continuing development as connected elements of health-workforce policy. This perspective is relevant to four of the six programs in the study and also illustrates a broader principle: graduate outcomes

emerge from an ecosystem rather than from curriculum alone. Institutional evidence therefore needs to connect classroom preparation with clinical or field exposure, licensing requirements, employer expectations, local labor demand, and graduates' own agency.

This study was designed to produce such evidence through graduates' narratives. Rather than treating employment as a single end point, it examines the sequence from graduation to licensure, first work, occupational adjustment, and continuing development. It also asks how alumni describe the influence of Luna Goco Colleges on their competence, values, and sense of service. The resulting themes can complement quantitative alumni records and guide decisions about curriculum content, experiential learning, career preparation, industry linkages, and alumni support.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to understand the post-graduation pathways and professional experiences of graduates of the six identified programs and to use their accounts as evidence for institutional and program improvement.

Research Questions

The study is guided by five questions. First, how do graduates describe their transition from college to licensure, employment, or further study? Second, what knowledge, skills, values, and learning experiences do graduates perceive as most useful in their work? Third, what barriers and enabling conditions influence employment, job alignment, and career progression? Fourth, how do workplace experiences shape graduates' professional identity and continuing-learning needs? Fifth, what improvements do graduates recommend for curricula, practical training, career services, and alumni engagement?

Significance of the Study

For institutional leaders, the findings can provide narrative evidence for strategic planning, quality assurance, accreditation, and universityhood initiatives. For program heads and faculty, graduate accounts can identify which learning experiences transfer effectively and where curricula need stronger practice, technology, communication, research, or employability components. For students, the study can clarify realistic transition pathways. For alumni and employers, it can create a structured channel for feedback and partnership. For future researchers, it can establish a qualitative baseline to be integrated with a larger quantitative tracer survey.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focuses on graduates of the six named bachelor's programs. It is concerned with lived transition experiences, perceived curriculum relevance, employment challenges, professional development, and recommendations. It does not estimate population-level employment rates, salaries, or licensure performance. Such estimates require a representative quantitative design and verified administrative data. The transferability of the qualitative findings depends on the variation achieved in sampling and the detail provided about participants and contexts.

Methods

Research Design

A descriptive qualitative tracer-study design was selected because the research questions seek accounts of experience and meaning rather than causal estimates. Semi-structured interviews allow graduates to reconstruct their pathways while giving the interviewer flexibility to probe program-specific experiences. Reflexive thematic analysis was chosen because it supports systematic interpretation of patterned meaning across a heterogeneous dataset while recognizing the researcher's active role in producing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022).

Research Setting

The study is situated at Luna Goco Colleges, Inc. in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. Interviews may be conducted face to face or through a secure online platform to include graduates living or working outside the province. The final report should specify the study dates, interview locations or platforms, and any contextual circumstances that affected recruitment or data collection.

Participants and Sampling

Purposive maximum-variation sampling is recommended. The sampling frame should include alumni from each program and should seek variation in graduation cohort, sex or gender where relevant, licensure status, employment status, job alignment, sector, location, and years of experience. An initial target of 24 to 36 participants, or approximately four to six graduates per program, is defensible for a cross-program qualitative study, but the final sample should be guided by information power: the specificity of the sample, quality of dialogue, analytic aim, and richness of the material rather than by a mechanical saturation number.

The sample should represent graduates from Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Pharmacy, Criminology, Medical Technology, and Social Work. It should include both recent graduates and members of earlier cohorts. Variation in current pathway should cover profession-aligned employment, employment outside the degree field, self-employment, further study, and active job seeking. Work settings may include public institutions, private organizations, nonprofit or community agencies, and overseas workplaces when applicable. Participants may be based in Oriental Mindoro, elsewhere in the Philippines, or abroad. Licensure status should likewise vary among licensed graduates, those preparing for an examination, those who have not yet taken it, and graduates for whom licensure is not applicable to their present pathway.

Eligibility criteria should include completion of one of the six programs, capacity to provide informed consent, and willingness to participate in an audio-recorded interview. Current students who have not yet graduated and persons unable to provide informed consent should be excluded. Recruitment should avoid coercion, especially where a researcher currently teaches, supervises, or evaluates a potential participant.

Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide should be reviewed by experts in qualitative research, alumni relations, and the relevant professional programs. Pilot interviews may be used to refine wording and sequence. The core questions should remain consistent across programs, with probes tailored to licensure, clinical or field placement, public service, and workplace technology.

For the transition domain, participants should be invited to tell the story of what happened from graduation to their present situation. Follow-up probes may address licensure, the job search, waiting periods, the first appointment, relocation, and major turning points. For educational preparation, participants should identify the parts of their LGC education that proved most useful, with probes concerning courses, laboratories, clinical or field placements, research, communication, and values formation.

To examine challenges, participants should explain what made the transition difficult. Probes may cover cost, confidence, credentials, experience requirements, professional networks, transportation, and family responsibilities. For workplace learning, participants should describe what they still had to learn after being hired, including equipment, documentation, digital systems, policy, teamwork, and client relations.

The professional identity domain should ask what being a professional in the participant's field means at present. Probes may explore ethics, service, accountability, resilience, and public trust. Finally, participants should recommend what LGC should retain, strengthen, or change in relation to the curriculum, facilities, licensure review support, internships, career services, and alumni mentoring.

Data Collection Procedure

After ethics approval, the research team should obtain an authorized alumni list or distribute invitations through approved alumni channels. Interested graduates should contact the team directly so participation is not visible to faculty or supervisors. Participants should receive an information sheet and consent form before the interview. Interviews of approximately 40 to 60 minutes may be conducted in English, Filipino, or another language preferred by the participant. With permission, interviews should be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcription should preserve meaningful pauses, laughter, code-switching, and emotionally significant expressions without exposing identity. Translations should retain the original-language excerpt in the audit file and document who translated and checked it.

Data Analysis

Analysis should follow the six recursive phases of reflexive thematic analysis: familiarization with the dataset; systematic coding; construction of candidate themes; review of themes against coded extracts and the whole dataset; definition and naming of themes; and production of the analytic narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022). Coding may begin inductively while remaining attentive to the research questions. Program labels should be retained during analysis so the team can distinguish shared patterns from profession-specific experiences. Themes should represent central organizing concepts, not merely lists of frequently mentioned topics.

The research team should maintain a codebook as a record of analytic development rather than treat coding agreement as proof of objectivity. Reflexive memos should document assumptions, surprising cases, theme revisions, and the influence of researchers' institutional roles. Negative or divergent cases should be examined to prevent the report from flattening different pathways into a single success narrative.

Trustworthiness

Credibility may be strengthened through prolonged engagement with the dataset, transcript or summary checking when appropriate, peer debriefing, and the use of rich excerpts. Dependability requires a documented decision trail that links recordings, transcripts, codes, memos, and themes. Confirmability is supported through reflexive disclosure and review of disconfirming material. Transferability depends on sufficiently detailed descriptions of participant characteristics and work settings. These strategies should be applied as substantive practices, not as a checklist (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Tracy, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

Approval must be obtained from the appropriate institutional ethics review body before recruitment. Participation should be voluntary, and withdrawal procedures should be clear. Names, employers, exact positions, and unique biographical details should be removed or generalized where disclosure could identify a graduate. Audio files and linking documents should be encrypted and accessible only to authorized researchers. Quotations must be checked for deductive disclosure. Participants should be informed that declining will not affect their relationship with the college. The final manuscript should state the ethics approval number, consent process, retention period, and data-disposal procedure.

Results and Discussion

Important status of this section. The six themes below form a provisional analytic model showing how authentic results may be organized. They are not findings from completed interviews. Participant codes and bracketed quotations are illustrative placeholders. Replace them with verbatim, de-identified excerpts from the approved transcript corpus and revise every interpretation to fit the actual data.

Participant Profile Reporting

Participant characteristics should be reported only after recruitment and consent. Ranges or grouped categories should be used when small groups could reveal individual identities. Each participant may be assigned a de-identified code linked to the academic program, such as N for Nursing, RT for Radiologic Technology, PH for Pharmacy, CR for Criminology, MT for Medical Technology, and SW for Social Work. The narrative profile should describe the cohort or graduation-year range, licensure status, current role or pathway, and general work setting or location without naming employers or disclosing details that could identify the graduate.

Provisional Theme Map

The provisional analytic model contains six themes. The first, licensure as a gateway and pressure point, considers how professional entry depends on credentials while preparation creates financial, emotional, and temporal demands. This theme applies especially to regulated programs and should be compared across different licensure pathways.

The second theme, the uneven passage to stable work, views employment as a sequence involving waiting, compromise, networking, relocation, and adjustment across all six programs. The third theme, practice makes preparation visible, considers how clinical, laboratory, field, and internship experiences provide a concrete basis for workplace confidence while allowing comparison among program-specific placements.

The fourth theme, service and ethics anchor identity, examines how graduates define professional success through responsibility to patients, clients, communities, and public trust. The fifth theme, learning continues after graduation, focuses on the continuing development required by digital systems, equipment, policy, documentation, communication, and specialization. The sixth theme, the college relationship should continue, addresses graduates' expectations for sustained licensure review support, career guidance, mentoring, employer connections, and alumni feedback.

Theme 1 Licensure as a Gateway and Pressure Point

The first provisional theme positions licensure as both an enabling credential and a period of uncertainty. Graduates from regulated programs may describe board preparation as a continuation of college rather than a separate event. Their accounts should be examined for the resources that support preparation: review programs, faculty coaching, peer study groups, family assistance, access to laboratories, and confidence developed through formative assessment. At the same time, fees, delayed examinations, repeated attempts, and pressure to meet family expectations may complicate the transition.

"After graduation, my immediate concern was the board examination. I felt that employment could wait, but I also knew that every month without work placed pressure on my family." "The degree gave me the foundation, but I still had to understand the recruitment process and prepare physically and psychologically for the requirements."

In the verified analysis, compare graduates who passed on the first attempt, passed later, were preparing at the time of interview, or pursued work not requiring the license. A strong account should avoid treating non-passage as individual failure alone; it should consider timing, review access, finances, caregiving, and labor-market alternatives. CHED's outcomes-based quality framework supports using such evidence to evaluate how program design and support systems contribute to demonstrated graduate outcomes (CHED, 2012).

Theme 2 The Uneven Passage from Graduation to Stable Work

The second provisional theme treats employment as a pathway rather than a binary condition. First jobs may be temporary, contractual, part-time, volunteer, geographically distant, or outside the degree field. Graduates may accept these positions to acquire experience, support their families, or remain economically active while waiting for a profession-aligned opportunity. Social networks, internship contacts, online applications, civil-service processes, and recommendations may shape access to work.

“My first job was not the position I imagined while studying, but it taught me how to communicate with clients and manage responsibility. That experience helped me move to a role closer to pharmacy practice.” “There was meaningful work available, but the opening was project-based. I had to decide whether to wait for a permanent item or begin serving communities through a short contract.”

Interpretation should attend to structural conditions alongside individual agency. The ILO (2022) notes that young people’s employment prospects are influenced by economic recovery, job quality, and unequal access to opportunities. Authentic transcripts may reveal that graduates define stability differently: permanence, predictable income, professional alignment, proximity to family, safe working conditions, or the possibility of advancement. These distinctions should be retained rather than collapsed into a single measure of being employed.

Theme 3 Practice Makes Preparation Visible

Across the six programs, participants may identify experiential learning as the point at which theory became usable. Clinical duty, laboratory work, radiologic positioning, medication counseling, forensic exercises, community immersion, case management, internship, and supervised documentation allow students to encounter real consequences, interpersonal demands, and workplace pace. The value of these experiences lies not only in technical repetition but also in feedback, role modeling, and the opportunity to recover safely from mistakes.

“The procedures were familiar because we practiced them, but the actual workplace required faster decisions and clearer communication with anxious patients.” “Laboratory principles were important, yet confidence came from handling specimens, checking results, and learning when to ask a senior colleague.” “Community exposure taught me that a case is never only a form. You have to listen, understand the family’s situation, and work within the resources that are actually available.”

When authentic data are inserted, specify what made a placement strong or weak: case variety, equipment availability, supervision, feedback, duration, student workload, safety, and connection to classroom content. Program comparisons may reveal a shared demand for more realistic simulation and longer or better coordinated field exposure, while the type of practice required remains profession-specific.

Theme 4 Service and Ethics Anchor Professional Identity

The fourth provisional theme concerns how graduates define themselves as professionals. Technical competence may be described as necessary but insufficient. Participants may connect professionalism with confidentiality, accuracy, respect, calm judgment, accountability, and service. In health programs, small errors can affect patient safety. In criminology, authority must be exercised lawfully and with public accountability. In social work, respect for dignity and self-determination must be balanced with protection, documentation, and limited resources.

“A result is not just a number. Someone’s treatment may depend on it, so verification and honesty matter even when the laboratory is busy.” “Discipline is not only following orders. It is knowing the law, controlling your response, and remembering that the public is watching how you use authority.”

This theme can be connected to the institution’s formative role without making unsupported claims of direct causality. Ask participants for concrete episodes in which college values, faculty examples, or service activities influenced a workplace decision. Contrasting accounts are equally important; some graduates may attribute their professional identity primarily to family, faith, workplace mentors, or later training.

Theme 5 Learning Continues after Graduation

Graduates are likely to encounter technologies, procedures, and organizational routines that were unavailable or different during college. The issue is not that a curriculum must reproduce every employer’s system. Rather, it should develop adaptable foundations and the capacity to learn safely. Potential areas include electronic records, laboratory information systems, digital imaging, inventory and dispensing systems, data privacy, online case documentation, report writing, evidence appraisal, and interprofessional communication.

“I understood the pharmacology, but I had to learn the workplace system, insurance procedures, inventory controls, and how to explain medicines in language the client understood.” “The first months showed me that communication and documentation were as important as performing the procedure correctly.”

The World Health Organization (2020) treats continuing development as part of a functioning workforce system. In the final analysis, distinguish skill gaps that appropriately belong to workplace induction from gaps that indicate a curriculum or facilities issue. Graduates’ suggestions should be triangulated with faculty, employer, licensure, and regulatory evidence before curricular change is recommended.

Theme 6 The College Relationship Should Continue after Graduation

The final provisional theme reframes alumni not as end points of a program but as partners in continuing quality improvement. Graduates may request sustained support for board preparation, job information, credentialing, mentoring, graduate study, and professional networks. They may also be willing to mentor students, host interns, speak in classes, or connect the college with employers if channels are clear and communication is purposeful.

“After graduation, announcements about openings and short trainings would have helped. Alumni who are already working can also explain what new graduates should expect.” “The school can continue asking us what is changing in practice. Our experience can help students, and the college can help us remain connected to learning.”

Authentic findings should identify which services graduates actually used, what prevented participation, and which communication channels they preferred. Alumni engagement should be reciprocal. Requests for data must be accompanied by clear benefits, privacy safeguards, feedback about how responses were used, and opportunities for graduates to contribute to teaching and institutional planning.

Cross Program Interpretation

The provisional themes suggest a common transition structure across six distinct professions: formal credentials open or restrict opportunities; employment pathways are shaped by both personal effort and external conditions; practical learning supports confidence; ethical service gives work its meaning; workplace competence continues to develop; and institutional support remains relevant after graduation. The value of cross-program analysis lies in identifying shared systems without erasing professional differences. Career services, alumni tracking, digital literacy, communication, research use, and mentoring may be strengthened institution-wide, while simulation, equipment, licensure review, and placement design require program-specific responses.

A completed qualitative tracer study should also preserve counter-stories. Some graduates may move quickly into aligned work; others may find meaningful careers outside their degrees. Some may view local employment as service and family proximity; others may regard migration as necessary for professional growth. Some may praise practical preparation; others may report limited access to equipment or cases. These differences are analytically valuable because they reveal the conditions under which the same institutional preparation leads to different pathways.

Thematic Transcription Process for Authentic Data

Each authentic transcript excerpt should be presented as a de-identified narrative passage with its participant code and transcript line numbers. Immediately after the excerpt, the researcher should explain the initial analytic code and interpret the meaning of the account within its context, including any contradiction, condition, or divergent experience. The discussion should then identify the relevant candidate theme or subtheme. Verification information should be stated in prose by confirming that the excerpt was checked against the audio recording, any translation was reviewed, and the participant's consent permits quotation.

The same narrative procedure should be applied consistently to every excerpt included in the findings. Researchers should maintain a separate secure audit record linking excerpts to codes, memos, candidate themes, audio checks, translation checks, and quotation-consent status. This record should not contain identifying information in the published manuscript.

Conclusion

This research-ready qualitative tracer-study manuscript offers a framework for understanding how graduates of Luna Goco Colleges, Inc. move from higher education into licensed practice, employment, public service, and continuing development. The proposed analysis goes beyond a count of employed graduates by examining how credentials, opportunity, experiential learning, ethics, workplace adaptation, and institutional relationships interact across six programs. Its six provisional themes can guide systematic analysis, but they become legitimate findings only when grounded in a complete, ethically collected transcript corpus.

Once authentic evidence is inserted, the study can provide a strong complement to a quantitative tracer survey. It can show why graduates follow different pathways, what aspects of preparation they carry into practice, and what institutional support would be most consequential. Its practical value will depend on preserving differences among programs and participants, reporting negative cases, and linking recommendations to specific evidence rather than to generic expectations.

Recommendations

The institution should complete ethics review and obtain informed consent before collecting or using alumni narratives. Recruitment should use maximum variation across all six programs and include graduates whose work is not aligned with their degree as well as those who are still seeking employment. LGC should maintain a secure alumni database with consent-based contact preferences and periodic updates on employment, licensure, further study, and location. The qualitative inquiry should be paired with a quantitative tracer survey so that narrative explanations and population indicators can inform one another.

Program-specific clinical, laboratory, internship, and field placements should be strengthened through explicit competencies, trained supervisors, structured feedback, and placement evaluation. Coordinated licensure and career-transition assistance should include review resources, application preparation, interview practice, civil-service information, and job referrals. Adaptable digital competence, professional communication, documentation, data privacy, ethics, and evidence use should be embedded across all six programs.

LGC should establish an alumni mentoring and employer-advisory mechanism that invites graduates to participate as speakers, preceptors, mentors, research participants, and curriculum partners. It should also create a documented institutional response process through which each tracer-study cycle leads to assigned actions, timelines, responsible offices, and follow-up evidence. Only verified quotations and findings should be published, an audit trail should be retained, and any use of digital or AI-assisted tools should be disclosed in accordance with institutional and journal policies.

Proposed Institutional Actions

For the transition to licensure, program heads, alumni representatives, and guidance personnel should develop program-based review and mentoring plans informed by performance evidence and graduate feedback. Progress may be assessed through participation, completion, licensure performance, and graduate evaluations of the support provided.

For first employment, career services, the alumni office, and industry-linkage personnel should establish a central vacancy and referral service supported by employer partnerships. Relevant indicators include the number of referrals, placements, employer partners, and the time graduates take to obtain their first job.

To strengthen practice readiness, deans, program coordinators, and quality-assurance personnel should conduct an annual review of simulation activities, laboratories, placement sites, and supervision. Evidence should include placement evaluations, demonstrated competencies, and an updated equipment-development plan.

For digital adaptation, academic programs should work with information and communications technology personnel and employers to map workplace technologies and transferable digital competencies. The expected evidence includes updated learning outcomes and assessed activities that demonstrate graduates' ability to use relevant technologies responsibly.

For alumni engagement, the alumni office and data-protection officer should maintain a consent-based alumni registry and mentoring network. Indicators may include updated contact records, active mentors, alumni events, and response rates. To close the quality-assurance loop, the research office, quality-assurance unit, and executive council should prepare an annual graduate-outcomes report and a documented action review identifying approved actions, responsible offices, timelines, and completion status.

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