

**University of the Philippines  
Academic Leadership Conference 2015  
9-11 March 2015, Taal Vista Hotel, Tagaytay City**

***Academic Leadership in a Globalized, Technology-Driven World***<sup>1</sup>

**Alfredo E. Pascual  
President, University of the Philippines**

*Isang mapagpala't mapagpalayang gabi sa inyong lahat.*

I would like to welcome everyone to the UP Academic Leadership Conference 2015. It is a pleasure to see UP's institutional and academic leaders from across the System gathered to exchange views and experiences on the challenges of leading the University and its various units and programs.

In UP, the country's lone national university, leadership is central to our existence and purpose. The UP Charter of 2008 (Republic Act No. 9500) mandates us to provide our unique and distinctive leadership in higher education and national development. In clear and categorical terms, we are called upon to serve as a graduate university, providing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and specializations for our country's aspiring academics and decision makers.

We are expected to serve as a research university, actively engaged in the production and dissemination of knowledge. With the knowledge we produce, we are mandated to lead as a public service university, providing technical assistance to government, industry and civil society. And as the premier higher education institution in the country, we assume our role as a regional and global university, by making positive contributions to issues, discussions and networks that shape the world today.

Consistent with our mandate as the national university, we have adopted the tagline "UP: Shaping Minds that Shape the Nation" as we acknowledge the leaders that we have produced in government, private sector, civil society, and international organizations.

History has shown that UP has produced those who lead the government and those who want to overthrow the government. Those who work to maintain the status quo and those who persist in challenging the status quo to produce social change.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech as delivered by UP President Alfredo E. Pascual at the opening of the Conference on 9 March 2015.

As the national university, we now face new challenges and opportunities in a rapidly globalizing and technology-driven world. Our continued leadership in Philippine higher education and our competitiveness in the global education arena rest on our ability to strategically pursue policies and programs that will enable us to continue doing what we do best while learning from others what we can do better.

### **Factors characterizing world class universities**

A tertiary education expert from the World Bank, Jamil Salmi<sup>2</sup>, identified three mutually-reinforcing factors at play in higher education institutions that are deemed world class universities: (1) abundance of resources, (2) concentration of talent, and (3) favorable governance.

Let me elaborate briefly on each of these factors. The first factor, **abundance of resources**, remains a very daunting and challenging issue for us. As a public university, UP has to compete with other sectors of the country for the limited resources available from the national government. We have, of course, succeeded recently in getting Malacañang and Congress to give UP a substantial increase in budget allocation.<sup>3</sup> In 2013, the UP budget was raised by 63% over that of the previous year. Again in 2015, the UP budget was increased, this time by an additional 40%. The MOOE budget for our academic units alone increased in 2013 to a level 3-1/2 times of what it was before.

We are building infrastructure projects at amounts never before attempted in UP, such as the P1B National Institutes of Health building. We have even been able to convince the national government to increase the capital outlay budget allocated to PGH from less than P400M in 2014 to over P3B this year, enabling it to modernize its health care and diagnostic equipment. By our estimate, we have generated over P9B of funding resources to invest in infrastructure projects for the 3-year period, 2013-2015. These funds are mainly from government allocations, and also from donors and our own savings. Now we have a big challenge: we must make sure that all the projects we have lined up in our different campuses – construction of new buildings and rehabilitation of old ones – are started and completed promptly as planned.

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<sup>2</sup> Jamil Salmi. The Challenge of Establishing World-Class Universities. 2009. The World Bank. Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup> UP budget from the General Appropriations Act: 2011 –P5.4B; 2012–P6.8B; 2013–P9.5B; 2014–P9.4B; 2015–P13.1B. A.E. Pascual started his 6-year term as UP President on 10 February 2011.

Our increased resources have allowed us to fund more research and creative work by our faculty,<sup>4</sup> on top of the very substantial research funding we are now getting from DOST, CHED, and other government departments.<sup>5</sup> We are also able to provide our faculty more fellowships for advanced studies abroad or locally, as well as more research dissemination grants.

We have just concluded a round of promotions effective 1 January 2014 – the biggest ever in terms of the number of faculty members benefitted and the magnitude of step increases granted. We are now considering the allocation of part of the proceeds of our income generating projects for establishing several UP-funded professorial chairs to help augment the income and incentivize the performance of our faculty.

We have been able to tap our alumni and friends for donations that support our priorities. Such donations have helped us establish the soon-to-be completed UP Professional Schools at the Bonifacio Global City, construct a dormitory in UP Manila, broaden internet access in our campuses through wifi networks, and start the development of modern facilities for our sports program, provide more scholarships and professorial chairs, among others.

But, of course, we will need more resources to further boost our capabilities. In this regard, I am committed to continue mobilizing funds for UP until my term ends in February 2017.

The second factor is **concentration of talent**. By talent, I mean both students and faculty. For students, we get the best and brightest among the high school graduates in the Philippines. In our President's Advisory Council meeting this morning, the Director of the UP Office of Admissions, showed us that based on the latest data, more and more students take the UPCAT over the years. It was also indicated that even with the increase in the number of students accepted this year (almost 15,000 compared to just 13,000 previously), the chances of qualifying for admission to UP is becoming more difficult each year due to increasing competition.

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<sup>4</sup> Through, for example, the UP Emerging Interdisciplinary Research (EIDR) program started in 2012 and with funding now reaching P250M, the Creative Work and Research Grant (CWRG) enhanced in 2014 (only 11 awarded in 2010, more than doubled to 27 in 2011, and increased by almost 50% in 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Examples: the P4.2B grants-in-aid (GIA) from DOST for 2011-2014 (more than triple the P1.25B GIA for 2005-2010); the close to P1B funding from CHED committed in 2014 for health innovation and information and communication infrastructure research projects under the Philippine-California Advanced Research Initiative (PCARI).

While we do get the top performers among the applicants, we admit that our admission system is far from perfect. Students from well-endowed high schools have a growing edge in gaining access to UP. We must find ways of taking in more students from underrepresented socio-economic classes and regions, without unduly lowering our admission standards.

Enrollment in UP by qualified students with financial difficulties is not an issue at all. We have reformed the socialized tuition system and the student loan program to take care of disadvantaged students. The roadblock we face in democratizing access to UP is “admission”, not “tuition”.

With regard to our faculty members, we can claim that their brilliance is one persistent defining character of UP that has withstood the test of time. In the Philippines, the icons in various disciplines are mostly from the UP faculty, the seminal works read by students are mostly produced by UP faculty, the CHED Centers of Excellence and Centers of Development are mostly found in UP. Those of you present here today are what make UP the national university. The pool of talents we have in our faculty is a ready source of experts for government, business, and civil society. Let us give a warm and thunderous applause to our faculty members, the reason why UP is number one in the country.

While UP remains uncontested as the country’s premier university, our benchmark now should not just be the other universities in the country but those in the region and the world.

Yes, we have limitations when we try to invite professors from other countries to join us in UP. Constraints come, for instance, from the civil service laws that restrict our ability to offer tenure to foreign professors. But we can do much more in looking at alternative ways and strategies to make our faculty more international.

We must also seriously address the decline in the number of PhD holders in our faculty with the separation from service of senior members over the years. Let us look at the numbers. In UP Diliman alone, 46.7 percent of the faculty in November 2011 had doctoral degrees. By January 2013, the proportion of PhD holders among the Diliman faculty declined to 31.2 percent, a 15 percentage point drop in 14 months. This is worrisome given that in top universities in ASEAN and the world, a PhD is a requirement for appointment to a teaching position. We must, therefore, accelerate our efforts to replenish our retiring PhDs, either by sending more of our young faculty for doctoral studies or by recruiting PhDs to UP. The latter is a quicker and cheaper option.

The third factor is **favorable governance** – strategic, innovative and responsive. Our gathering tonight and our discussion in the next two days will focus on the leadership aspect of governance, especially the type of leadership needed for academic success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Leadership in governance is crucial in an environment where both competition and collaboration in higher education have become global.

I believe that the two seemingly conflicting postures in our dealing with other leading universities can help spur UP towards greatness. With nurturing leaders across the breath of UP's academic disciplines, we can achieve excellence in our education and research functions. Such excellence will be the basis for us to compete, as well as to collaborate, with other quality institutions in producing competent leaders and research outputs for the benefit of the country and humanity as a whole.

### **Challenges to academic leadership**

We can subdivide the solution we seek as academic leaders into at least four themes: (1) academic content, (2) innovative pedagogy, (3) incentive structure, and (4) sustainability. More simply, we should concern ourselves with questions of *what we teach, how we teach, and how we inspire others to teaching and research excellence*. These are the challenges that the UP System and our constituent universities (CUs) are currently working to address in our quest for excellence in teaching and research.

Allow me to elaborate on the importance of each of these four points. First, we have the issue of **academic content**. I believe the question of what we teach and the reasons for teaching them are central to every university's existence. Through teaching, we share the best of our collective knowledge to our students as we inspire them to think for themselves. What sets our graduates apart from the rest is their well-roundedness. For this, we have a strong general education (GE) program to thank.

With the introduction of the K-12 system in the Philippine basic education sector, it has become necessary to revise our GE program to better suit the types of students we will admit to UP by the time we start getting K-12 graduates. I know that a task force composed of professors from each of our CUs is currently hard at work to improve the GE Framework that was proposed in 2013. When this work is finished, the academic leaders of UP will next develop and implement the courses that produce citizens equipped with both knowledge and integrity.

With regard to the mix of UP's academic offerings, the question is one of right balance between comprehensiveness and focus. Because of limited resources, we cannot afford to spread ourselves too thinly. I believe that it will be in the best interest of the Philippine higher education sector for UP and other universities to streamline our program offerings and focus on select areas of specialization where we can be excellent, and thus, competitive.

This niching strategy will enhance our potential to become not only local but also international leaders in our chosen areas of specialization. Faculty members and students from different departments and/or institutes of comparable status of excellence can collaborate on equal footing in interdisciplinary teaching courses or research projects aimed at solving the nation's pressing problems.

Our second issue is **innovative pedagogy**. In this regard, we ask ourselves how we can use technology to improve our teaching, and our research and extension work as well. It is true that technology and the *massification* of higher education have brought with them many challenges. But they have also given us more opportunities to deliver education and promote lifelong learning effectively and efficiently.

Last 13 February 2015, I attended the final round of the first-ever Gawad Pangulo: a Competition for Progressive Teaching and Learning. This was held in UP Diliman. It was a contest that showcased how four finalists from our faculty, given a meager budget of P50,000 each, could revolutionize their students' learning experience.

The winner, Dr. Irise Thiele Isip-Tan of UP Manila's Medical Informatics Group, used her budget to create teaching videos inspired by the massive online courses of top foreign universities. Like Dr. Isip-Tan, we expect our academic leaders present today to create and promote the learner-centered, research-driven teaching methods that will enrich minds and change lives.

Often the toughest barrier to be surmounted in developing a culture of innovation is mindset. I am hopeful that the next two days will open the minds of our academic leaders as they find the way towards innovative models of pedagogy that are both more effective and more accessible.

I consider the third challenge to academic leadership – **incentive structure** – to be the backbone of our quest for excellence in teaching and research. Any move to make UP a great university must address the challenge of recruiting and retaining great faculty members. We need an environment that fully

supports their talents. We must ensure that an adequate system of compensation and incentive is in place. Tenure and promotion, in particular, must be based on equitable rules that are reflective of a culture of excellence and these rules must be enforced fairly.

Only the most qualified people should carry the distinction of being UP faculty members. These are the scholars who will serve as valuable resources in undertaking our teaching, research, and public service functions.

I am sure that with the sharing of knowledge and experience by our resource persons in this conference, we can better fine-tune our systems to be at par with the region's best.

Lastly, I believe that academic leadership must be built on a model of **sustainability**. How do we create a culture that promotes continuity in leadership when academic and institutional leaders serve for finite terms? Visions, goals and strategies must be commitments of the institution as a whole and not just the current leaders. This will help ensure that successions of leaders build on each other's achievements.

Another mechanism for ensuring sustainability is quality assurance. As an academic institution, we should never proclaim ourselves as leaders without evidence. Just as we seek advice today from university and industry leaders, so too must UP, as a whole, seek objective assessments of its own capabilities.

Our programs must be assessed by highly reputable academic bodies. These evaluations can give us a clearer picture of where and how leadership has raised the quality of our programs; and where improvements are needed. They also help benchmark our standards and practices with the other leading universities outside the country.

I am proud to say that several undergraduate degree programs across UP System have chosen to be leaders in this respect. During the past two years (2013-2014), two (2) academic programs from UP Diliman and three (3) from UP Los Baños were successfully reviewed by international panels under the auspices of the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) Framework.

Several of our faculty members are also being trained not only to assess other ASEAN universities, but also to help us self-assess our own academic programs using the AUN-QA criteria. Other programs in the university are either actively

seeking local accreditation, or preparing for discipline-specific assessment frameworks, such as the Washington Accord and the Canberra Accord.

## **Conclusion**

While we have had several successes on these four fronts, we know that many challenges remain. As the management of universities becomes increasingly complex, the need for genuine leadership in academia also intensifies.

I believe this conference will give the current and future institutional and academic leaders of UP not only the knowledge and skills but more importantly, the inspiration to take the next steps and to take them boldly. I challenge all participants, therefore, to use what you will learn from this conference as the basis for making changes in your respective units – changes that will make a difference in the learning experience of our students and in the way we manage research and public service. In our collective pursuit of greatness, I know the lessons you learn here will give you the boldness to make big decisions.

May the discussions in the next two days show us the way to build a growing corps of innovative and committed academic leaders in our beloved University. May we have the passion to share the culture of excellence in academic leadership with others in UP.

*Mabuhay ang UP! Padayon UP! Salamat po.*