

# A VISION BOLD AND CLEAR: PRIDE OF PLACE, PRIDE IN PEOPLE

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It has been almost three years since I wrote a vision paper for UP Diliman, in my bid for the chancellorship. The paper was entitled "Pride of Place, Boldness of Vision".

In the last three years, I can confidently say we have developed pride of place, interacting with a greater boldness to dream for UP Diliman. In those three years, I have also seen how pride of place is tied not just to physical spaces but, more importantly, to pride in people, and that it is this pride, and trust, in people, that allows us to soar to greater heights.

A few months ago, I crafted "2020 and Beyond: A Vision Bold and Clear", during the search process for the post of UP President. My "old age" cut short my candidacy but I feel much of what was in the paper applies as well to a vision for UP Diliman. I have therefore retained significant portions of "2020 and Beyond" but have also edited this vision paper for UP Diliman, where changes often resonate for the entire UP system.

I say this with humility, having seen in the last three years how a more nurturing UP community has added to our strength as a constituent university (CU). ***We are learning to listen to each other, to open our campus, and even more importantly, our hearts, to the broader communities we belong to, and to the nation.***

I did my 2014 paper after strolling around the campus; I write this paper more sedately but still with reflexivity. I think of how Quezon Hall Complex, where my office is, has seen commencement exercises, cultural performances, a silent drill from the student cadets of the Philippine Military Academy, as well as mass actions of students, labor, farmers and national minorities. More than splendid sunrises and sunsets, UP Diliman has come alive with people, and their causes.

UP Diliman has come alive too with sounds, *himig ng Diliman*, from the Carillon pealing with full force to protest the mangling of heroes and heroism to the cheering in athletic events as



we regain pride and confidence in our varsity teams. The sounds of Diliman include, as well, the reverential pauses and silences where we remember and honor those who came before us.

We talk of Tatak UP; I want propose a Tatak Diliman, consisting of models for Good Practice, developed proudly through our own insights and experiences.

We must be as bold as our islander ancestors who dared to set out to explore what was beyond the horizon. I am certain the courage our ancestors had to seek new horizons came from their knowledge that their endeavors would always be collective and cooperative. They dreamt, they built their boats called *balangay*, set out and, when they reached land, used that same term, *balangay*, to refer to their new settlements and communities.

We need to be bold but our vision need to be clear as well. In the sometimes turbulent seas of the academe that we navigate, we must always be guided by the intertwined principles of academic citizenship and academic freedom. These terms refer to active participation, by all constituents, in processes that move us forward, our voyages animated by openness and constant dialogue. These terms are too often preached or invoked, and so remain abstract and irrelevant. In the context of UP, they must be lived out and tested in day to day interactions as we dare to struggle, and dare to win (*Mangahas makibaka, manghas magtagumpay*).

UP must move forward as one, even as we appreciate our strength comes from diversity. Within our CU's, we must become inclusive, constantly aware of how our activities – from the composition of working committees to the design of our buildings – might exclude people because of age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, even normatively different personalities.

I offer the following vision statement, drawn from many years of experiences as a student from 1971 to 1977, as an educator from 1977 onwards (in civil society and in our own university), and as an administrator from 1997 to the present. It



is a statement of aspirations shared with many, especially fellow administrators with whom I had the privilege of serving UP.

Let me just outline the points in the vision before I elaborate.

I will first describe my vision in terms of the people we serve: first and foremost our students, and, equally, our faculty, our staff, and our alumni. Then I will describe the tools that come with our vision. These are streamlined bureaucratic procedures, equity-based measures of excellence, human resources development, health services as top priority, responsible stewardship of resources and engagement with the world. Aware of who we serve, and the tools we have, we can better respond to our mandates for developing academic programs, a research as production and distribution of knowledge, public service and the waging of peace and justice.



## WHO WE SERVE

We must encourage, in all our courses, the development of lateral thinking, logic and intuition not privileged over the other.

- 1 First and foremost, we in UP must give our all for the iskolar ng bayan entrusted to us, some 27,000 students who come at a time of change, from the new K-12 system to a world marked by post-truth populism. Now more than ever, our students must pick up not just critical thinking but higher order thinking skills, the ability to discern and to synthesize, to become innovative and creative so our graduates leave UP armed with knowledge from the natural and social sciences, the arts and humanities.

This new generation of students must be given opportunities to break down two artificial dichotomies that plague the academe. First is the dichotomy between body and mind, reinforced by the idea that sports are extra-curricular activities without academic credit. We have seen a resurgence of pride in our varsity players; this must be extended to developing our sports and fitness programs to impress on students the importance of healthy bodies, healthy minds.

The other artificial dichotomy that needs to be challenged is that of right- and left-brained learning. Drawing from our UP Pep Squad mantra – UP utak at puso – we must encourage, in all our courses, the development of lateral thinking, appreciating logic as well as intuition.

Our infrastructure development must recognize the importance of learning environments. Libraries must be reconfigured into learning commons, no longer silenced spaces but places that unleash creative potentials for individuals and groups. Similarly, our classrooms and laboratories must be reconfigured to encourage new pedagogies that recognize both individual and collaborative learning.

More than physical infrastructure, our students need to see a continuation of improvements and expansion in housing, health and nutrition services, psychosocial support and activities for recreation and renewal. Transport and mobility has become a pressing issue and must be part and parcel of pride of place.

Special attention must be given to graduate students, too long excluded from many of the benefits offered to undergraduate students. These will include financial support, opportunities for teaching assistantships, and academic services such as expanded remote access to library databases and assistance for editing theses and dissertations.



## WHO WE SERVE

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We need educators who can tap into the many new technologies without losing sight of the basics, appreciating and developing the art of listening, of face-to-face interactions, of mentoring, nurturance and of, yes, a still unfashionable word that needs to be boldly incorporated into our academic ethos: compassion.

- 2 We need to develop educators, and not just teachers. Tatak UP and Tatak Diliman must now be extended to include our pedagogies, developed through decades of practice not just at the college level but also through what I have called the greatest public school in the country, UPIS (UP Integrated School), now celebrating its centennial.

Despite the exemplary contributions of our faculty, we are too often overworked and under-compensated. We need a faculty united to press for more faculty items, just compensation and better working conditions.

We face a serious crisis of faculty succession, many academic units with “missing” generations because of younger faculty not being recruited in adequate numbers, or in other cases, faculty leaving for greener pastures or being driven away by inhospitality and intrigue. We therefore need to accelerate our efforts to attract and keep the best of educators and researchers, not just through financial incentives but through a system that recognizes diverse tracks: teaching, research, educational leadership and/or professional practice.

To keep these best and brightest, we need to ensure an environment for professional and personal advancement. Faculty need decent classrooms and laboratories to teach and mentor, and opportunities for further study and development. Faculty also need support services that extend into their personal lives, for example, child care facilities.

Perceptions of arbitrariness in retention, promotions and tenure are serious, and must be addressed through a meritocracy with codified parameters. This meritocracy must also include a professional code of conduct that holds faculty accountable for all we do, and to make amends for deficiencies. Finally, the meritocracy becomes meaningful only when there are functional oversight and grievance mechanisms.

In this age of powerpoint presentations and LCD projectors, we need educators who can tap into the many new technologies without losing sight of the basics, appreciating and developing the art of listening, of face-to-face interactions, of mentoring, nurturance and of, yes, a still unfashionable word that needs to be boldly incorporated into our academic ethos: compassion.

## WHO WE SERVE

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- 3** To serve those who serve, the staff, we must affirm the dignity of labor. Many of our staff, particularly contractuales, live on the barest minimum of wages. We need to offer more to those who have the least in life, in terms of job security, financial incentives, staff development and social services. My administration has introduced many benefits that covered regular staff as well as contractuales and outsourced workers because we consider them part of our UP community.

We need to develop stronger grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms to handle interpersonal conflicts, often a source of stress for individuals and entire offices. For all our constituents – regardless of rank and social status – we must uphold an ethos of respect, particularly for our staff.

Our bold vision for the future must include the children of our staff. Maternity and paternity leaves and child caring facilities, and health services coverage are vital for this next generation.

In the long term, staff benefits must not deteriorate to dole-outs. We need to support our staff with training for start-up income generating programs together with financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

- 4** Bridging generations through the alumni and retired staff. UP must overcome its ageist biases. Our alumni complain at times about being seen merely as people with accumulated wealth from whom donations are expected. Indeed, because of this orientation, we have descended into the trap of transactionalism, with alumni and faculty and students thinking constantly of what we can get from each other in benefits. Fortunately, a new ethos has developed among a growing number of alumni, younger and older, crossing ideological and organizational boundaries and speaking of giving without strings attached. This “walang kapalit” orientation must be encouraged and sustained.

Ultimately though, we need to go beyond the donations and recognize our alumni, and retired staff, as women and men of wisdom with much to contribute for UP and the nation. We must assure them of continuing access to our physical spaces and services, so they return constantly to UP, a place for succor and comfort, as well as a venue for them to tell their stories, so vital in building pride of place, and pride in people.



## THE TOOLS TO SERVE

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Technologies should be used with discernment. Foremost, technologies should help our educators — in teaching, research or administration — to locate the necessary information and resources to get work done.

- 1 Streamlining our bureaucratic processes. For too long now, we have emphasized the letter of the law, making and enforcing of rules and procedures, forgetting the spirit of these rules, which is to enable people and institutions to serve the public. The bureaucratic procedures consume the time of our staff and administrators as approval papers become embroidered with more and more signatures, littered with disapprovals and referrals to more bureaucracies.

We can rationalize the procedures, especially where they involve urgent needs such as reimbursements of medical expenses, and emergency loans. We can cull the useless (and often unjust) processes through consultations, time-motion studies, organizational reviews and end-user surveys. In this context, e-UP has potential for connecting the dots and improving communications.

Technologies should be used with discernment. Foremost, technologies should help our educators — in teaching, research or administration — to locate the necessary information and resources to get work done.

- 2 As an educational institution, we must maximize opportunities for continuing education for all in the university. The faculty are fortunate in being able to access opportunities for further studies and training but much more needs to be done especially for our REPS and our staff.

Our Human Resources Development Office (HRDO) is often consumed by paper trails and processing. We need an expanded HRDO that can live up its name of developing human resources, dedicated to identifying opportunities for staff development, through Civil Service Commission reviewer classes, short-term courses for personal as well as professional improvement, or academic degrees. An expanded HRDO would also help our constituents to go through the bureaucratic gauntlets of travel grants, travel permits, bookings and even, with the help of academic units, cultural orientation for those going overseas.

- 3 Among the social services we can offer our constituents, health and wellness must be a leading priority, with programs oriented toward prevention of illness and a mobilization of our University Health Service, in coordination with the Philippine General Hospital.

UP Diiman is, in fact, serving as the pilot project for a primary care project between UHS and PGH that will emphasize preventive medicine, even as we improve on greater support for the curative. UP Diliman has pioneered in terms of providing insurance for our students and has worked with the UP System to overhaul to FAPHE, the medical reimbursement scheme. We will



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continue to look for ways to provide more comprehensive health financing schemes, tailored for specific needs of populations such as student athletes, student cultural performers, manual and laboratory workers.

The improvements in the University Food Service and food concessionaires will continue, moving toward the provision of good food, “good” defined in nutritional value and healthier eating, even as we address issues of affordability and provision of more dining areas.

- 4 UP’s excellence must build on equity. There has been a shift, throughout the world, toward the use of quantitative measures of excellence, and rankings. These are useful, but we need to take the lead in the formulation of new measures of excellence in equity to guide many of our policies. I present these metrics in the form of questions:

Are we taking in more students from lower income households, as a national university must? It is not enough to just talk about taking in more poor students; we must go out and look for the gifted students in high schools, maybe even grade schools, and institute, together with our own students, mentoring and buddy programs that will give the disadvantaged a fighting chance to get into UP.

We must ask ourselves too: Are we considering students disadvantaged by other circumstances: physical disabilities, age, sexual orientation, gender, differences in learning styles that often mask extraordinary intelligence and talent.

Once disadvantaged students enter UP, are we doing enough to keep them in the university till they finish their degrees, and as they transition into the world outside? Are we doing enough to bring some of them into our faculty and staff, so they can become part of building a UP that is truly a national university?

- 5 UP must be a better steward of resources entrusted to us. The nation has entrusted to us not just the Iskolar ng Bayan but also vast resources. Diliman’s land grants alone total some 500 hectares.

UP Diliman must use these resources wisely, through comprehensive resource use and maintenance programs. My administration has drawn up models for public engagement in partnerships, with the view of maximizing benefits for our constituents.

Our infrastructure development must be guided by clear land use principles with a respect for the environment and with an appreciation of heritage through the preservation and restoration of older buildings and public spaces. Heritage appreciation must not, however, be confused



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## MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR MANDATES

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with sentimentalism. New, retrofitted or restored, all our spaces must be safe, secure and sustainable, and our activities must be Green, based on materials recovery and recycling, and the use of renewable energy. Work toward a Diliman-wide disaster response and resilience program has been started, and must continue, bringing together the expertise of our different academic units to ensure an effective and integrated response.

- 1 We need academic programs that are innovative and integrated. We must break down silos, encouraging transdisciplinary approaches. Rather than creating more degree programs, sometimes fashionable or trendy ones, we must expand alternatives such as majors and minors, dual degrees, joint degrees, ladderized programs, honors degrees, professional degrees and PhD through research, all of which have a better fit to the needs of our times.

The highest priority must be given to General Education, (GE) in terms of faculty items and a GE Center to strengthen curricula and pedagogy

UP Diliman should set the pace for Philippine Studies programs as part of GE. These can be foundational courses and programs, as majors or minors, in Philippine Studies as well as local regional studies developed in UP Diliman (for example Central Luzon studies in UP Pampanga), as well as in other constituent universities (eg Cordillera Studies, Mindanao Studies, etc.). Such programs will produce graduates who are aware of, and tap into our patrimony in terms of cultural, social resources, our languages and literatures, as well as the wealth that is our flora, fauna and natural resources.

The distinction between “academic” and “extra-curricular” activities should be challenged; after all, the “extra-curricular” always feeds into the academic and vice versa. An important example comes with our cultural performances, which should not be seen purely as entertainment but as our contributions to advancing the creative industries.

Finally, we need to develop core programs that provide the “software” for learning futures. I refer specifically to creativity, innovation and communications “packages” of subjects that can be taken and applied regardless of a students’ professional focus, making them leaders in whatever they do, even to the extent of pioneering new cutting-edge professions that we cannot even begin to imagine today.



## MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR MANDATES

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Beyond designations as academic centers of excellence, our cultural performances can transform UP campuses into cultural hubs in their cities and regions that shape national culture.

- 2 The heart of our academic programs must be the production and dissemination of knowledge, driven by a research culture. This research culture must include ethical practice, rooted in a Science, Technology and Society (STS) foundation that interrogates science for its potentials as well as limitations, daring to explore the mysteries of land, sea and outer space, but having the humility to accept and respect nature.

Part of this research culture must be observatory-like programs and institutions that conduct intensive monitoring and evaluation in their fields of expertise. This observatory function has been strong in the natural sciences but must now be extended into the social sciences, management sciences, arts and humanities.

We must give high priority to the development of integrated information sciences, tapping our School of Statistics, the School of Library and Information Sciences, College of Engineering, and the Population Institute for the collection, archiving, management and big data analysis.

- 3 UP must develop our mandate of public service and take our place in the community of public schools.

The NSTP (National Service Training Program) offers many opportunities for developing a culture of public service among our students but, in addition, we must consider how students can identify other areas for public service in field schools, OJT (on the job training) and other out of campus learning experiences. Such public service programs must not fall into the trap of dole-out charity missions and must instead be developmental, helping people to help themselves.

We must prioritize, in our public service, our immediate communities and local governments. It is a source of shame that within UP Diliman we have communities living in the most sordid of living conditions.

Our public service must draw from pride in our existence as a public school. Although officially designated now as the national university, UP must remember it still belongs to a family of public schools that includes 101 state universities and college as well as those run by local government units. There is, too, an even wider community of public educational institutions, from pre-schools and kindergartens to science high schools. Many of these public educational institutions have surged forward under the leadership of UP alumni. We must expand collaborative efforts with other public educational institutions around teaching and research, as well as sharing Good Practices in policies and projects.



## MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR MANDATES

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- 4 UP must look out to, and engage, the world. We must start with our backyard, the eight barangays that overlap with UP Diliman. We must walk our talk about democratizing access to UP by increasing the number of young people from our barangays who can enter UP or benefit from our extension programs in the arts, science and sports.

When I began my term as chancellor, I learned that our ties with the Quezon City government had been strained. We have now made amends, building strong and productive relationships with them. At the next level, we have built ties with national agencies, particularly those concerned with education, with the environment and disaster responses. We look forward to restoring a fire station that will serve as an important hub for fire safety.

With so many Filipinos in diaspora, UP owes it to the nation to ensure that internationalization serves the Filipino. Pride in UP must include the courage to learn from the world, particularly our neighbors in Southeast and East Asia, from whom we have been too long estranged because we were more enamored with the western world. Pride in UP must include an awareness and understanding of regions further beyond.

We should continue to build more ties with universities overseas particularly through consortia such as the ASEAN Universities Network and the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU). At the same time, we must remember internationalization begins at home, in building our Asian Studies programs and courses on faith-based groups in the region, particularly Islam. Internationalization also means developing our foreign languages offerings, and, in the natural sciences, courses that demonstrate our geological, geographical, climatic and biological links of our archipelago to the region. By developing these programs, we can better serve not just our students but also the private sector and government agencies involved with foreign service, immigration, labor and employment, even national defense.

UP Diliman, too, must improve our facilities to draw in international faculty and students, and to allow us to host more international conferences, workshops, lectures and visiting professors. Aiming high, we can become a hub for international exchanges of knowledge and skills, with the Faculty Center, reconfigured as a Faculty Commons, becoming the soul of the campus for exchanges, still with the much revered Claro M. Recto Conference Center.

## MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR MANDATES

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- 5 UP must wage peace, with justice. In its more 108 years of existence, UP Diliman has seen much social unrest and conflict, even producing rebel leaders. UP Diliman must be unrelenting in respecting life and waging peace. We must again start in our campuses, supporting inter-fraternity alliances that pledge to end fraternity violence, further developing in consultation with students our student codes based on restorative justice rather than punitive measures.

In our troubled post-truth era, it becomes all the more important for UP Diliman to intensify its efforts around truth-telling and to ensure the university will be protected from outside political interference.

Our vision for the future must be synchronized too with ongoing negotiations to end armed rebellions, as well as addressing causes of strife and conflict. The ceasefires we all yearn for will endure only if we can find sustainable solutions to our social and economic problems, building on the axiom that peace comes only with justice. Helping to find those solutions is the most formidable challenge for UP as a national university. It is a challenge we must accept, our confidence drawn from a knowledge that we have started the waging of peace in our own lives, in our own beloved UP: pride of place, pride in people, and pride of nation.

