

Summary and Closing Remarks

BALANGKAS: Symposium on Potential New GE Courses

Vice-Chancellor Benito M. Pacheco

Let's view our reflections on today's Symposium three ways: about GE courses, about UP, and about GE programs.

But before anything else, let's thank the 111 faculty members who attended today, including GE course proponents, advocates, champions, and academic unit leaders. We also thank the staff and the committee who tirelessly organize our numerous GE gatherings.

Thank you for making time to listen to, respond to, appreciate, and understand each other in the broadest sense; after all, we are discussing college education in general. We value the process of consultation at all levels and dialogue among all disciplines.

Regarding our GE courses, we mind the "numbers and shapes," like mathematics does as one of our deans stated today. It is admirable how once more today we practiced "collaboration and remaking" not only in writing as thinking generally but specifically in the design and redesign of proposed syllabi. We expressed the need, and the willingness, to bring departments together in designing and delivering GE courses that are multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary in shape. A new course on persuasive communication, for example, would include logic and rhetoric among its lessons together, perhaps, with technology. With the variety in numbers and shapes among all the courses discussed today, we also affirmed that a GE course need not be the sole charge of a single department or a single college.

It is equally admirable that proponents of courses have started to consider various operational details. To differentiate from Comm 3, we heard the tentative code of Speech 36 for the proposed course on persuasive communication; or it could be Speech 45, or Speech 21. In all likelihood we would agree to reshape, rename as well as renumber each evolving new course; our dialogue on the development of new courses continues.

Coordination among departments is, of course, additional effort or load on the part of the faculty members. Hence, we may very well continue to attribute additional faculty load credit to the teaching of every GE course, more than the student credit. It is conceivable that every 3-unit GE course in a student's checklist continues to be 4 or more units of load credit for the teacher or team of teachers, the additional load being recognized through overload honorarium.

At the same time, we may very well need additional faculty members and faculty items to allow the university to continue pursuing our broad mandate without overloading the academic personnel. And the national government recognizes this. This brings us back to the perspective of UP.

"May sariling identidad ang UP," sabi nga ng isa pa nating presentor. UP is comprehensive university. UP as the national university is equally mandated to improve its GE program and improve such other offerings as minor programs, honors programs, graduate programs, researches and creative works, and extension works. Repeating the words of the Chancellor, we continually innovate to give the best options to our students, the University, and the nation.

Sa kaguruan ng UP ay walang mawawalan ng ituturo o isasagawa, magbago man o magbawas man ng GE yunits sa mga kurikulum ng mag-aaral. We are collectively engaged in multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary GE. We can be jointly engaged in major-minor degree programs. We will be formally credited for our institutional works in graduate education, research, creative work, and extension work.

Amidst the broad range of academic activities in UP, we have “unity in diversity,” like complex living systems as described by another course presenter today.

Other universities, or the CHED itself, may be doing it differently. We in UP can very well evolve our GE program with distinctive “Tatak UP.”

Holistic, nationalist, gender-sensitive, in the service of the Filipino people, UP’s GE program remains. Today we affirmed these attributes of ideal Tatak UP GE Program. The challenge lies in the practical design and delivery of courses in the curriculum.

We may yet surprise, pleasantly, our students, their parents, and our selves with the new GE program and courses that will evolve and emerge from our long-running consultation and dialogue series. Everyone is excited.

As the Chancellor highlighted this morning, we have very new course proposals, which augur well for the Tatak UP, too. They include the proposed courses on Human Movement as a Phenomenon (led by the College of Human Kinetics), and Wika, Kultura at Lipunan (from the System-wide GE Mini-Conference that was suggested by UP Diliman).

Sa aking opinyon, at paumanhinan po ninyo ang pag-ulit, ang Tatak UP GE ay nasa kalidad at hindi sa kantidad ng yunits. It’s the quality, not the quantity. It’s in the multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary quality of our courses together as a program, not in the number of courses. UP’s multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary kind of GE must be good not only for the general student population of UP but also for us the faculty who are collectively engaged, helping make our thinking, our works, our use of languages – Filipino, English and languages of the disciplines – more liberal and liberating.

We salute all faculty members, including those who attended today, for discussing with each other and, in the process, elucidating the different courses put forward, and for keeping an open mind while speaking from the pure heart.