



had to skip a family affair on Mar. 8, 2020 because Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo requested for an Emergency meeting. The meeting was also attended by then Vice Chancellors Evangeline C. Amor, Jose Ernie C. Lope,

and Jerwin Agpaoa, incoming Vice Chancellors Aleli Bawagan and Ma. Theresa T. Payongayong, and Dr. Oliva Basuel, Deputy Director of UP Health Service. The agenda was twofold: institution of the UPD Covid-19 Task Force (UPD CTF) and the immediate response to the then forthcoming Luzon lockdown due to the global health crisis.

It was only a few days since Dr. Nemenzo was appointed Chancellor by the UP Board of Regents. That time, we were preparing for pre-investiture activities such as media releases on his appointment and the dissemination of information about his new term to partner institutions. Also, the semester was just midway. Several departments were expecting to facilitate midterm examinations. Some departments were preparing for their students' field-schools. The UP Diliman (UPD) Festival of Arts and Culture and other cultural activities such as the restaging of Dulaang UP's "Nana Rosa" have just opened.

A day following the institution of the UPD CTF, there was disruption. Beginning Mar. 9, classes were suspended. The following week, the national government announced the lockdown of the entire Luzon Island to avoid the further spread of the virus.

During the lockdown, the disruption was felt aggressively. We felt the virus was coming closer, and closer to homes. People dear to us started to leave us. Several of our family members, relatives, friends, colleagues left us due to lingering diseases only to be aggravated by anxieties caused by the pandemic and a lot of them due to COVID-19 itself.

I lost two loved ones not because of the virus but because of the Big C. My partner passed away in March and a month after, my father followed. They were the most vulnerable, but ironically, they had to leave the safety of their homes for their respective chemo cycles. They were already physically experiencing fatigues and pains, yet, the virus added to their mental stresses.

Out of fear, people had to connect the losses of my partner and my dad to the virus. Someone even posted on her social media account that my partner passed on due to COVID-19. People who were calling me to sympathize started to ask if dad's passing was caused by the virus.

The hospitals where they were admitted had to make sure that both were not infected by COVID-19 before their remains were released from the morgues. Funeral homes were hesitant to accept their bodies for fear of what else – the virus. Since I was with my partner until his last breath, I was asked to do my own quarantine, being tagged as a Person-Under-Monitoring (PUM) until my test came out negative. That was the only time I was allowed to grieve.

My mom had to do the same when dad passed away. I had to wait for the approval of my travel pass to enter Angeles City in order for me to join my mother and my siblings in mourning. Funeral services were not allowed. I guess I could say our mourning and grieving were incomplete: friends and relatives were not allowed to participate in celebrating the lives of my partner and my dad. Due to the imposition of physical distancing, we were not allowed to feel the warmth of an embrace as a gesture of sympathy and condolences. COVID-19 has really affected our well-being and even our concept of self, relationships, and place-making.

This issue of "UPDate Diliman" centers on COVID-19 – how it affected our UPD Community and how amidst the pandemic, the UPD Community thrived to be an exemplar in the management of the virus while continuing to perform its mandates of honor and excellence in teaching, research and creative work and in public service.

In this issue, we feature our UPD experts providing descriptive notes and annotations on the pandemic. We are fortunate to print new poems by National Artist Virgilio S. Almario, which he wrote during the lockdown. A visual commentary by Prof. Romanlito Austria of the College of Fine Arts is also featured in this issue presenting to us his visual representation

of the lockdown experience plus his summary of his coping mechanisms as a visual artist in these times of uncertainties. Dr. Eloisa Hernandez of the College of Arts and Letters also has graciously contributed 30 of her photographs of the campus during the lockdown.

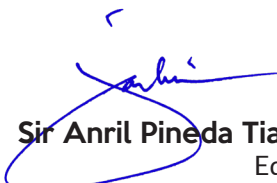
Students, REPS and administrative staff share their stories about the lockdown/quarantine. I am sure, we can vicariously relieve these encounters for we have stepped into everyone's shoes during the aforementioned period. We shared the same boredom and anxieties while finding strength from our loved-ones and from within our inner cores.

We are also featuring in this issue a comparative time-table of the COVID-19 responses of the world (through the World Health Organization), the Philippines (through the Department of Health and the Inter-Agency Task Force) and the UPD (through the Office of the Chancellor and the UPD CTF). We begin the time-table in November 2019, the birth of the virus in East Asia and we end in October, the period when this UPDate issue was born. The timetable is being presented to everyone as a better visualization and for a better understanding of the formation of the UPD CTF – its necessity for the UPD community.

The centerpiece of the issue is #TatagUP, the initiatives of UPD units and UPD alumni in the fight against COVID-19, which we feel are testaments to UPD as really the embodiment of honor, excellence and compassion.

Finally, this issue is also envisioned as an archival reference for the benefit of the future generations. We are hoping, when times get back to normal, the UPD CTF will serve as a source of inspiration and as a source of hope.

We have persevered as a community. We have continuously fought back against different threats and we have always seen opportunities for growth and development during the times of crises. UPD will remain a fortress!



Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco
Editor