

Statement of UP President Alfredo E. Pascual on the Status of Disaster Management Efforts for UP Visayas in Tacloban and UP School of Health Sciences in Palo, Leyte

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Tropical cyclone Yolanda hit the eastern seaboard of the Philippines on Friday, 8 November 2013, and devastated the provinces of Samar, Leyte, Cebu, Bohol, Iloilo and Palawan. Two UP units were severely damaged by the super typhoon – UP Visayas Tacloban College (UPVTC) campus (1,543 students, faculty and staff) and UP Manila School of Health Sciences (UPM SHS) in Palo, Leyte (209 students, faculty and staff).



As news of the devastation reached me, I immediately instructed Vice President for Public Affairs Prospero E. de Vera to organize a disaster relief effort.

I also met with my executive staff and the chancellors of all UP constituent units on Monday, 11 November 2013 to map out a coordinated effort to reach out and assist our students, faculty and staff in the affected areas.

Aware of the need for urgent action, I also issued the following memoranda to hasten our disaster management effort:

1. Memorandum PAEP 13-35 (11 November 2013) launching **Tulong UP** to mobilize material and financial donations for the victims of Typhoon Yolanda (<http://www.up.edu.ph/memorandum-no-paep-13-35-help-for-victims-of-typhoon-yolanda/>). By late afternoon of the 11th, dozens of UP students, faculty, and staff worked together to pack 1,000 relief packs which were immediately dispatched for delivery to Tacloban via Air Force C130 flight. We also shipped out that night several boxes of clothes and other goods collected by the UP Diliman Student Council. A truckload of relief goods was provided by UP Los Banos the other day. Senator Koko Pimentel responded as well with a cash donation of P100,000 and medicines worth P100,000. We thank all our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends here and abroad who are sending donations for this effort.

2. Memorandum 13-36 (13 November 2013) and Memorandum 13-37 (15 November 2013) instructing the chancellors of UP Diliman, UP Manila, UP Baguio, UP Los Banos, UP Mindanao, and UP Visayas in Iloilo, plus the dean of UP Cebu to accommodate all affected students from UPVTC who wish to cross-register in their respective campuses for the second semester so that these students do not suffer a delay in their studies. (<http://www.up.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Memo-PAEP-13-36-URGENT-cross-registration-of-UPVTC-students.pdf>) (<http://www.up.edu.ph/memorandum-no-paep-13-37-implementing-guidelines-cross-registration-of-upvtc-students/>). A number of UPVTC students have already signed up to cross-register in UP Diliman, Manila, Cebu, and Iloilo. UP Los Banos has offered dormitory accommodation and living allowance to at least 100 of those who will cross-register there. Still, there is a need to further widen the dissemination of information re the cross-registration opportunity for benefit of the UPVTC students.

UP Visayas Chancellor Rommel Espinosa sent a 4-member reconnaissance team to Tacloban to look over the UPVTC campus and bring money for cash advance to UPVTC faculty and staff. The team arrived in Tacloban on Thursday, 14 November and stayed for two days. The contacts on the ground for UPVTC are Dean Anita Cular (0917-328-1357) and Associate Dean Anida Lorenzo (0917-357-0650).

UPM SHS Dean Buddy Dastura (0917-803-4929) returned to Palo from Manila also on the 14th and is now on the ground to assess the situation and provide recommendations on how we can best assist our constituents in the School of Health Sciences there.

From reports received so far, we are thankful that there is no fatality among our students, faculty and staff in the two areas. We will continue to seek and assist all the affected members of our academic community until we know everyone in need of assistance has been provided with aid.

A UP Manila Pahinungod medical team led by Dr. Eric Talens will leave this Sunday (17 November 2013) to render emergency medical assistance to our Palo, Leyte campus. A forensics team led by Dr. Racquel Fortun is now working with the Department of Health, Asia Foundation, and the International Red Cross to handle the management of dead bodies in Leyte and Samar.

We are also preparing to send a technical team of UP professors who are experts in civil engineering, architecture, urban planning, and geohazard assessment to be led by former Architecture Dean Dan Silvestre. The team will evaluate the damaged physical infrastructure and facilities of our Tacloban and Palo campuses. Their work will provide guidance to our rehabilitation plan. We will continue to work with Philippine authorities on the ground to offer the services of our medical, forensics, and technical experts in the areas that are not covered by other government agencies.

While the situation on the ground is improving, the road to relief and reconstruction will be long and challenging. I appeal to all members of our academic community to continue helping us locate, reach out and help all our students, faculty, staff and their families in the affected areas. I also ask that you continue to mobilize resources and expertise to help us provide relief and reconstruct our campuses, the communities around them, and all other areas devastated by this typhoon.

The loss in the affected provinces is immeasurable, but there are reasons to hope. For one thing, this Philippine tragedy has served to bring the world together, as the international community quickly responded by sending aid and rescue teams. Help came pouring in from foreign governments, from international agencies, and from ordinary people. We are truly living in a global village now, and this growing awareness of our interconnectedness, not only among nations but with our own planet and its inhabitants, is a source of inspiration for us.

In the wake of this devastation, we are given an unparalleled chance to start again. When we rebuild our towns and cities, we can take the opportunity to make them better, smarter, more resilient and more sustainable. We can redesign our communities into places that nurture healthy and creative lives for people.



Alfredo E. Pascual

President