

Reimagining an Agile, Smart and High-Impact UP for a Resilient, Equitable and Sustainable Philippines

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These are extraordinary times for the University and our country. In the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic sent us reeling, exposing our vulnerabilities but also bringing out our resourcefulness and inner reserves of fortitude and creativity. Today, while we are more aware of the rapidly changing and thus more precarious world we live in, we are also presented with new possibilities on how we might reconfigure that world.

As a university system composed of eight constituent universities (CUs) spread in key regions of the country, and having the widest range of course offerings and research programs, UP is uniquely positioned to meet this challenge.

To discharge its mission as the national university, UP needs a President who knows how to mobilize its diversity of talents and assets to help find solutions to the country's age-old problem of food insecurity, low productivity and inequality, as well as confront the emerging problems arising from climate change, disruptive technologies and financial volatility. It needs to enhance its academic, research and extension programs aimed at strengthening multidisciplinary problem-solving and promoting greater cultural understanding.

As UP President, I will strategically position UP as a premiere public service institution, working in partnership with government, industry, civil society, social movements, and other institutions of higher learning. I offer a vision of an agile, smart and high-impact UP for a resilient, sustainable, equitable and competitive Philippines.

An **agile UP** will allow us to pivot and respond quickly to disruptions. We will bring to bear some of our newest academic research programs in bioinformatics, data science, artificial intelligence, and others in order to anticipate and adapt to change. At the same time, an agile mind is also fostered in an environment of critical thinking and democratic culture.

A **smart UP** means pushing through with our digital transformation. Pursuing connectivity across the System, the use of blended or hybrid modes of learning and digitization of learning resources will facilitate collaboration in research, sharing of resources, mobility of faculty and students across the different constituent universities. Digitation of our administrative processes and services will mean greater efficiency and enhanced operationalization of our three-fold mandate of teaching, research and public service.

A **high impact UP** entails advancing the University's role as a premier R&D, policy and innovation hub. We will develop academic programs and promote research that will contribute to the country's pursuit of resilient, sustainable and equitable development as well as competitiveness. This can only be done in a nurturing and enabling environment and an atmosphere of academic freedom for our students, staff and faculty. In order to achieve impact, there must also be regular dialogue with government, industry, communities, civil society and other stakeholders of development to inform curriculum development, policy formulation, or product innovation.

Toward advancing UP's mandate, I will strengthen UP's general education and STEM programs, using the new pedagogy and digital tools that helped us through the pandemic, to produce highly-skilled, agile, and advance-thinking graduates who are strategically-equipped to address the country's present and future needs. Scaling up UP's public service means incentivizing problem-solving research so that such studies produce innovative yet viable policies or products. I will develop institutional arrangements so that the university becomes a virtual and physical hub for expertise, technology and policy for our faculty, researchers and students. Together with our partners here and abroad, I will continue to strengthen UP as a teaching and research institution par excellence.

With the help of my team, I will work closely with the different constituent universities and undertake the following:

AGILITY in new blended learning and work environments and research

- a) Create a nurturing and enabling environment for our faculty, researchers, students, and administrative staff; encourage an atmosphere of inclusivity and openness, based on the promotion of academic freedom and grounded in ethics in the new blended learning environment.
- b) Promote the use of digital platforms and faculty and student exchange programs as a mode of facilitating interdisciplinary research collaboration across CUs.
- c) Institutionalize the formation of provisional multi-disciplinary and inter-campus task forces or other such committees to address critical national events, issues, or emergencies.
- d) Strengthen the general education (GE) program so students develop critical, creative, and collaborative thinking to address a complex new world, imbued with the necessary cultural and ethical moorings in this age of globalization and new technologies.
- e) Bolster our sports programs as part of holistic education and community building; integrate *Ugnayan ng Pahinungod* and NSTP under the GE framework of education for citizenship.

SMART Networking, Collaboration, Digital Transformation

- a) Incubate and promote collaborative and interdisciplinary thinking and research with the development of the UP Data Commons, Digital Humanities, and Open Research approach.
- b) Digitize UP's archives and research materials to facilitate the sharing of resources across the CUs and other state universities.

- c) Push for administrative and operational efficiency and institutionalize the necessary support mechanisms and grants for problem-solving knowledge production. This entails the continued refinement of recently-developed administrative digital platforms such as UTAK, BULSA, PUSO, TALAS, that will be shared among UP CUs.
- d) Taking into account the digital divide, we will set up technology spaces and other facilities to assist underprivileged students.

HIGH- IMPACT on the UP Community and Country

- a) Promote and enhance the well-being and dignity of the members of the UP community- its staff, faculty, REPS and students. Each one plays a vital and complementary role in the life of our university.
- b) Encourage closer ties with industry and government and synergize efforts toward nation-building with tripartite committees to study and to propose innovative solutions to problems, or to design new systems for the future. Collaborate with SUCs to enhance their education and research programs to meet the needs of the regions and the nation.
- c) Promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Develop and institute graduate and research programs in cutting edge fields such as data science, artificial intelligence and complexity. Examples of recent such initiatives are the PhD programs in Artificial intelligence and Data Science, and the establishment of the UP Center for Intelligent Systems. Work closely with the Department of Science and Technology in the promotion of incubation hubs and MSME startups.
- d) Develop a UP Governance Agenda, drawing on the expertise from all CUs on areas such as the maritime and blue economy, agriculture and food security, national industrialization, energy, culture and heritage, and environmental sustainability. This means translating research outputs into policy recommendations.
- e) Promote inter-CU problem-solving toward addressing the country's uneven regional development. Here, researchers working on campuses' flagship programs will be encouraged to draw from the expertise of their counterparts in other campuses toward enhancing the impact at the regional level.
- f) Expand the capabilities of the University's research units such as the UP Resilience Institute and promote public awareness and engagement with government, civil society and communities on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.
- g) Institutionalize and implement a program for environmental sustainability and transform our campuses into models for environment-friendly practices, such as bike-sharing schemes and the phase-out of single use plastics. Facilitate the transition of our university's energy sources towards renewables.

- h) Create vibrant campuses as centers of art and culture, and social and technical laboratories to test new and innovative problem-solving research such as traffic schemes, environmental sensory technologies, and community development programs. This includes developing media and tech platforms such as UPTV and DZUP radio to disseminate research findings, material for teacher training, modules for classes, and updates on university events and programs.

UP's agility, smart, and high-impact approach will promote resilience in the time of rapid changes and challenges in the post pandemic world and era of climate change. Tripartite efforts and dialogue with the government, industry, and civil society will promote equity as solutions to national problems. Shared resources and the collaboration with other universities will develop interdisciplinary research and disseminate research findings more effectively. UP as a modern research university will fulfill its public mission to build a resilient, equitable and sustainable Philippines.

The success of the country's national university is a crucial requirement for economic and social development, and especially development with equity. I have always maintained that support for the national university is a necessary investment for building the nation.

I reiterate what I said three years ago during my nomination for the Chancellorship of UP Diliman: I have devoted all my life to UP. As *batang UP*, student, faculty and administrator, I have had the privilege of learning from and collaborating with some of the best and most creative minds in the university. I have thought long and hard about the life and future of UP, and I treasure this opportunity to lead and shepherd the energy and talents of our faculty, REPS, staff and students towards realizing our ideals, values and dreams as *Iskolar ng Bayan*, *Iskolar para sa Bayan*.

It will be my honor to serve as the next president of the University of the Philippines.