

**CONTINUITY IN BREAKING NEW FRONTIERS FOR
EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: A THREE-YEAR
PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE
U.P. OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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The fundamental basis for this plan of action is the need for continuity in UPOU's development plans and operations. The current vision and goals of UPOU, which were put in place six years ago, continue to be relevant and appropriate and, therefore, must be continued. The UPOU strategic plan, which has been the foundation of the university's operations in the last six years, remain sound and realizable. In fact, such strategic plan was formulated and intended for the period until 2008.

As I did in my first term as Chancellor, I shall follow the same vision, mission, goals, and values in a second term should I be given that opportunity. All these are expressed in a manner that make them timeless and always relevant and necessary. There simply is no need to alter them unless the educational environment has drastically changed. All that is needed is a refinement of how these may be operationalized.

This is what this paper is all about. First, let me restate what the present vision, mission, goals, and values are of the UPOU. Then, I shall present what we have been able to put in place in the last three years. Finally, I shall outline how we intend to refine our operationalization of the vision, mission, goals, and values of the UPOU in the next three years.

Vision

The UP Open University shall be at the forefront of the knowledge society as a leading institution of open learning and distance education.

Mission

Adhering to the philosophy of open learning and distance education, the UP Open University shall:

1. create dynamic, innovative, alternative learning environments, technologies, and opportunities that shall draw out the full potential of learners;
2. reach out to a wide spectrum of learners; and
3. contribute to the upgrading of the quality of education in the country.

Goals

The goals of the UP Open University are:

1. to offer degree and nondegree programs, through open and distance learning, that are responsive to the needs of the learners and the society of which they are a part;
2. to develop a system of continuing education to sustain professional growth and promote lifelong learning;
3. to develop and adapt delivery systems appropriate to the distance learner;

4. to provide leadership in the development of open learning and distance education expertise in the country in the appropriate use of information and communication technologies for education; and
5. to make instructional packages accessible to various publics through collaborative arrangements, institutional agreements and other appropriate mechanisms.

Values

The UP Open University shall uphold the following values:

Excellence

UPOU shall promote academic excellence as it adheres to UP's standards. The value of excellence, likewise, shall permeate all aspects of UPOU's entire operations and shall be manifested in the performance of its staff.

Equity

UPOU affirms its open access policy in terms of student admissions, but shall maintain the rigors of learning in producing quality graduates. The value of equity shall likewise be observed in the fair practice of recognition and reward for performance.

Efficiency

UPOU is committed to the efficient delivery of its services to its various clientele. The value of internal efficiency shall be translated to optimum use of resources in the operations of the university.

Humanism

UPOU shall uphold the primacy of human concerns over the use of technology as a means of achieving its goals. The value of

humanism shall also be expressed in terms of the university's concern for the well being of its personnel.

Achievements of the Last Three Years

The Achievements of the UPOU in the last three years may be categorized according to six operational groupings, as follows: programs, delivery system, student support services, human resources development, institutional linkages, and governance. A detailed discussion of all the items listed here, including other additional outputs, will be available in the *End of Term Report* of the Chancellor, which is under preparation.

Programs

1. Completed the development of courses under the MIS program.
2. Developed and began offering the following nonformal courses:
 - Online Teaching and Learning
 - Introduction to e-Commerce
 - Information Technology in Health Research
 - Certificate in Barangay Administration
3. Developed and offered training courses in computer and Internet skills development, flash animation, video production, and photography.
4. Revised the MAEd program (Language Studies component), and together with the MIS, offered it as pilot degree programs for the human resources development program of CHED.
5. Conceptualized and began implementing the Graduate Education Enrichment Program (GEEP) where graduate students of other HEIs are allowed to cross register with the UPOU for courses designed to strengthen their graduate study

programs in their respective universities. This program has been endorsed by CHED.

6. Established a continuing education program as a major undertaking of the UPOU to coordinate the conceptualization, planning and implementation of nonformal courses and programs as resources generation activities.
7. Graduated the first batch of PhDs.

Delivery System

The fundamental model for the delivery of instruction at UPOU has been in place from the very beginning. Improvements, however, were introduced in the last three years. Among these are:

1. The ICT support is being greatly improved with the increase in bandwidth from 256kbps provided by Pacific Net to 512kbps through an agreement with PREGINET. Even IPB of UPLB has selected to link up with the UPOU due to this higher bandwidth capability. Some bugs, however, need to be fixed, and PREGINET is doing this now.
2. During the period under review, the following new books were published and are now on sale:

Social, Economic and Political thought: A Study Guide
The Psychology of Reading
College Algebra, Volumes 1 and 2
Aquatic Ecosystems
Computer Education 1: Introduction to Basic Computing
Speech Communication
Literature and Society
Biology: a Study guide
Introduction to Economics
Introduction to Development Communication
(a co-publication with SEARCA)

3. A one-season television program was broadcast on Channel 9 every Saturday to promote the programs of UPOU and test the courses under the Certificate in Barangay Administration program. As a result of an evaluation of this program, refinements shall be introduced and a generic television program shall be conceptualized and launched.
4. UPOU redesigned SEAFDEC courses for online delivery on a regional scope under an agreement with SEAFDEC.
5. A number of publications in conventional and electronic publications were authored by UPOU faculty and staff. Four were recipients of the UP System's International Publications Award.

Student Support Services

Student support services were further strengthened with the introduction of the following innovations:

1. Online tutorials. This has become standard for all courses and students have been looking forward to it each semester.
2. Online registration. This is being regularized after pilot testing.
3. The use of credit card in transacting financial business with the UPOU has been introduced and the UP System is waiting to see if it works before implementing it system-wide.
4. Digitization of student records has been initiated.
5. The Library now has online service where students may search materials online and request for hard copies of materials they need in their courses through the Learning Centers.
6. The UPOU Library has initiated and continues to digitize its holdings, particularly those produced by the UPOU such as instructional modules and papers written by UPOU personnel.

Human Resources Development

1. We have continued to support the faculty and staff in their efforts to earn advanced academic degrees. During the period, two have completed their PhDs and one completed her MS. Four are continuing their PhD programs, while 10 are working on their respective MS degrees.
2. More than 20 faculty and REPS with assistance from the UPOU attended international and national conferences, while more than 30 administrative staff participated in national seminars, workshops and conferences.
3. More than 20 in house seminars and workshops were conducted for both UPOU faculty and staff as well as from other UP units.
4. In 2002 one faculty member was a recipient of the UP System's international publications award program, while in 2003 three were recipients of said award.

Institutional Linkages

The following are the new institutional linkages established:

1. UPOU was designated as the Academic Focal Point for the Philippines (AFP) under the ASEAN Virtual Institute of Science and Technology (AVIST) under the auspices of ASEAN's Committee on Science and Technology. As AFP, UPOU shall lead in the development and offering of professional development courses to be offered in the DE mode for S&T personnel in the ASEAN Region.
2. UPOU was designated by the Information Technology and E-Commerce Council (ITECC) of the Philippines as its e-Learning Competency Center.

3. UPOU co-organized the first two national e-learning conferences.
4. UPOU conducted seven regional seminars on distance education as part of its mandate as CHED's COE for open learning and distance education.
5. UPOU entered into an agreement with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) to develop courses in plant genetic resources to be offered for PGR scientists in the Asia Pacific and Oceania Regions. The first course now being developed is *Law and Management of PGR Resources*, and shall also be offered under the auspices of AVIST for the ASEAN region.
6. UPOU was reelected to the Executive Board of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU). We are hoping for a third term.
7. The UPOU Chancellor was appointed by SEAMEO to a three-year term as member, representing the Philippines, in the Governing Board, SEAMEO Regional Center for Open Learning (SEAMEOLEC) based in Jakarta.
8. UPOU entered into a long-term, project-based agreement with the Foundation for Information Technology Education Development (FITED) for the training of teachers nationwide in the use of computers and the Internet in education. So far, the UPOU has trained, under this project, more than a thousand teachers nationwide.
9. During the period under review, 32 papers were presented in international conferences and 35 were presented in national conferences by UPOU faculty and REPS. This has enhanced significantly the influence of UPOU regionally in the field of distance education.

Governance

The single most important initiative in governance in the last three years was the reorganization of UPOU. From a top-heavy structure, UPOU has been streamlined and all related functions have been consolidated to ensure efficiency of operations.

Main features of the reorganization are the following:

1. All staff functions related to academic matters have been consolidated and placed under the direct supervision of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and all staff functions related to pure administration placed under the direct supervision of the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration. Therefore, there are now only two vice chancellors.
2. The five original Faculties have been realigned into three Faculties: Faculty of Education (FEEd), Faculty of Information and Communication Studies (FICS), and Faculty of Management and Development Studies (FMDS). This was done in order to highlight the areas where UPOU has claimed expertise in – in the technology-oriented fields rather than in the basic sciences where it does not have its own pool of expertise. This was deemed necessary in order to ensure UPOU's role in the development and offering of academic degree programs in the UP System. The UPOU is acknowledged by the UP System as its own center of excellence in open learning and distance education as well as in the development and production of instructional packages that the other constituent universities can use in their programs.
2. The reorganization has also provided the opportunity to establish the following important units:

Multimedia Center
Office of the Legal Counsel
Management and Information Systems Office

3. The functions of student support services are now the primary concern under the supervision of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and there are mechanisms under this office that shall focus on these functions. Coordination of student support services, particularly that which deals with the operations of the Learning Centers, is an important collective function and as such has been strengthened through more appropriate consolidated structure and supervision. As well, the functions of research coordination and continuing education coordination are lodged with the OVCAA. Appropriate structures within the OVCAA have been provided to handle the requirements of this shift in functions.
4. The Office of the Faculty Dean has been strengthened to include functions related to academic program development, faculty and tutor recruitment and training, student records, coordination of tutorials, standard student-oriented activities, conduct of faculty and staff research, academic program promotion, and conceptualization, marketing and implementation of continuing education courses.

Scheduled for Launching in February 2004

During the 9th anniversary of the UPOU in February 2004, the following undertakings shall be launched:

1. Multimedia Center, as the main unit of the UPOU responsible for the mass production of multimedia instructional packages for use not only by UPOU but by other HEIs in the Philippines. It shall be operated as a business enterprise to design and produce educational materials for other institutions for a fee. Part of this will be the “launching of the UPOU is the “eLearning Competency Center” of the Philippines’ Information Technology and eCommerce Council (ITECC).
2. UPOU Research Monograph, an annual peer-reviewed research publication as an outlet for research done by UPOU faculty and staff.

3. Launching of books published by the UPOU in the last year, including launching of the first book co-published by UPOU and SEARCA under an omnibus MOU.
4. Launching of UPOU's increased bandwidth (from 256 kbps to 512 kbps) through a formal connection with the PREGINET backbone to connect Learning Centers and make possible a two-way video conferencing for both program delivery and management purposes.
5. Online Registration for Degree Programs, to facilitate registration of incoming students particularly those based in other countries.
6. UPOU 700. This is a UPOU-SMART Information Dissemination Program, a nationwide program to provide basic information on the UPOU and its academic programs and operations through text messaging in collaboration with SMART Communications. This same system shall also provide feedback mechanism through which UPOU students may directly communicate with the OUR and other offices of the UPOU employing SMS technology.
7. Launching of a daily segment of the program *Radyo Balita* of ***Radyo Filipinas***, the overseas service of the Philippine Broadcasting Service titled "Mula sa U.P. Open University". This shall provide news and information on distance education in the Philippines and the UPOU for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).
8. Mobile Learning (m-Learning) system as a means of providing learners nationwide learning assistance in various fields such as English, health, culture, values and the like.

Plans for the Next Three Years

The following are priority major undertakings to be pursued during the next three years.

Academic Programs

The following graduate programs shall be developed:

- Master in Educational Technology
- Master in Distance Education
- Master in Multimedia Studies
- Graduate Certificate or Diploma in Education

The Diploma in Research and Development Management shall be upgraded to a Master's degree program.

We shall also begin to conceptualize a PhD in Multimedia Studies. It is the powers of disciplinary convergence and capacity for interactivity that this emerging discipline makes itself an appropriate growth point for the UPOU.

Undergraduate programs to be pursued shall include the following:

- Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies
- Bachelor of Management

Nonformal programs and courses shall be developed and offered in areas that shall be determined through comprehensive needs analysis to be undertaken by the different Faculties. As well, we shall carry such courses as may be accredited by the AVIST, the UPOU being the Academic Focal Point of AVIST in the Philippines.

Delivery Systems

The following shall be undertaken:

1. Increase to at least 30 the number of courses to be redesigned to be highly interactive, stored in CD-ROM format and also offered fully online.
2. Provide at least one or two online tutorial sections for each course offered every semester.
3. Establish a mechanism to provide radio broadcast support for courses offered each semester.
4. Launch an m-Learning (mobile learning) system.
5. Strengthen UPOU's capability in audio and video conferencing through its access to the PREGINET network and enhance delivery of course materials and interaction between faculty and students.

Student Support Services

Digitization of student records and documents shall be completed within the next 12 months, and business transactions shall be fully electronic within the next twenty-four months. Among the features of this project shall be the following:

1. Students shall be offered a one-stop-shop mechanism through improved online services such as in enrollment, registration, payment of fees, access to semestral programs and course materials.
2. A mechanism shall be put in place to make Transcript of Records of students graduating available on the day of graduation.

3. The alumni shall be co-opted to participate actively in the promotion of UPOU programs and operations in the effort to increase enrollment, as well as in the generation of resources. At the same time, worthwhile university activities shall be put in place for the benefit of alumni interested in continuing education.
4. By Academic Year 2005, the incremental increase in the number of incoming (new) students shall be about 500 every first semester.

Human Resources Development

The following shall be pursued:

1. Continue strengthening the distance education competency of staff by increasing opportunities for in house seminars and workshops and participation in external seminars and conferences.
2. Maintain top caliber faculty through further training and advanced studies both in the conventional and distance modes.
3. Prepare and implement a manpower development plan indicating professional development paths for each faculty member and staff according to the program development directions of the university.

Institutional Linkages

In the next three years . . .

1. At least 10 UPOU faculty and staff shall present papers each year in national and international conferences, seminars and workshops.

2. The UPOU shall continue to conduct regional seminars on recent developments in open learning and distance education for the benefit of higher education institutions in the Philippines.
3. The UPOU shall continue to conduct special training courses in writing for distance education, e-Learning, as well as in the use of ICT in instruction.
4. Increased efforts shall be made in strengthening current linkages with open universities and other institutions worldwide, as well as opening up new linkages. Specifically, the UPOU shall continue to be active in the affairs of the Asian Association of Open Universities and the SEAMEO Regional Center for Open learning.
5. The UPOU, as the Academic Focal Point in the Philippines for the ASEAN Virtual Institute of Science and Technology (AVIST), shall increase efforts in the development and offering of both formal and nonformal courses and programs for S&T researchers in the ASEAN Region.
6. The UPOU shall pursue more vigorously its partnership with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) in developing appropriate courses for researchers to be offered in the distance mode.
7. The UPOU shall exert more effort in the promotion of the Graduate Education Enhancement Program so that more graduate students from more universities and colleges in the Philippines may have access to UPOU courses.
8. The UPOU shall continue to be co-organizer of the national annual e-learning conference, in collaboration with the ITECC and CHED. In this connection, the UPOU, as ITECC's Competency Center for e-Learning, shall continue to offer its online teaching and learning course for faculty of other HEIs. It shall continue to innovate in the areas of e-Learning and m-Learning.

9. The UPOU shall continue establishing working relationships with consular offices of the Philippines abroad as well as selected organizations that can help promote UPOU programs in other countries. Specifically, working arrangements with the AWARE Foundation, specializing in the affairs of OFWs, shall be finalized to facilitate recruitment of students for both the formal and nonformal courses of UPOU, and the promotion of UPOU academic degree programs among OFWs.
10. The UPOU shall launch and broadcast on a continuing basis a regular segment in a specific radio program in collaboration with Radyo ng Bayan, to provide radio support for the courses and programs of the UPOU.

Governance

1. Implement a plan of action for a more extensive use of ICTs in the management of the affairs of the UPOU through proper use of audio and video conferencing in the conduct of meetings as well as effective and efficient transmission of records and documents.
2. Strengthen the capabilities of the MISO in computerization of records and documents so that data may be accessible more quickly for management purposes.
3. There shall be increased efforts in operations research for the purpose of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the UPOU as an open university.
4. There shall be increased efforts in the conduct of in house training and seminars to enhance the skills and capabilities of faculty and staff in the conduct of their respective tasks.
5. Increasingly, full-time faculty members and REPS will be involved in the management of the affairs of the UPOU.

6. The UPOU will eventually be the main entry point to the UP Complex in Los Baños, hence the UP Oblation shall be erected on the UPOU rotunda near the national highway. Surrounding this famous UP marker shall be an aesthetically conceived water garden in all the 4-hectare frontage of the UPOU building.