

PDLC is speaker at UPLB 50th commencement rites

He is a professor, a lawyer, and an agricultural engineer, all rolled into one. But for the past six years, the UP community has known and respected him for one important role – as president of the country's one and only National University.

UP President Danilo L. Concepcion, referred to in university circles as PDLC, will headline the 50th UPLB Commencement Exercises on Aug. 6 at the EB Copeland Gymnasium to address the 1,549-strong class of 2022.

The said event also marks the resumption of face-to-face graduation rites on campus, two years after the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted large public gatherings.

Since taking the helm of the University in February 2017 as its 21st president, PDLC has integrated to UP's motto of honor and excellence the virtue of compassion – translated in Filipino as *malasakit*.

During his acceptance speech as UP president at Quezon Hall in UP Diliman, he said: *"Sa susunod na anim na taon na ating pagsasamahan, malasakit ang magbibigay bigkis at buhay sa lahat ng ating layunin, sa lahat ng ating mga kilos, sa lahat ng ating mga galaw."*

(In the next six years that we will be together, compassion will unite and give life to all our objectives and all our actions.)

Half of PDLC's six-year term has been characterized by the University's adaptation and resilience to the pandemic. As the UP System sailed through the pandemic, honor and excellence with compassion served as the guiding point in the policies and mechanisms of the Concepcion administration to ensure the continuity of teaching, learning, work, and development in the University. This, while taking into prime consideration the welfare of the UP faculty members, REPS, administrative staff, and students all over the country.

PDLC himself has embodied honor and excellence in his track record, as a student and as a professional and a public servant.

He graduated as *summa cum laude* in BS Agricultural Engineering at the De La Salle Araneta University

(DLSAU) in 1979. After four years, he earned his Bachelor of Laws at the UP College of Law as *cum laude*. In 1989, he obtained a Master of Laws from the University of London, Queen Mary College, as a Chevening Scholar of the British Government.

Prior to becoming the president of UP, PDLC had been entrusted with leadership positions at the college, university, and national levels. At the UP College of Law (UP Law), where he is a professor teaching corporate law, succession, persons and family relations, problems in commercial law, special proceedings, and supervised legal research, he served as dean (2011-2017) and associate dean (2002-2006). He also headed the UP Law Center and the Institute of Judicial Administration of the College.

Concurrent as UP Law dean, he served as the executive director of the UP Bonifacio Global City, which also offers the Juris Doctor program. Prior to his deanship, he had a brief stint as vice president for legal affairs of UP in 2017.

PDLC also applied and honed his leadership skills outside UP and academe. He became the president of his engineering *alma mater* DLSAU from 2000 to 2002. In the national government, he was appointed as associate commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission (1996-2000), and as chief of staff of the Chief Presidential Counsel of the Office of the President of the Philippines (1996). He also served as a member of the Interim Batasang Pambansa representing the youth sector (1978-1984).

A renaissance man in his own ways, PDLC adds to his multi-faceted career his previous stint in broadcasting at DZMM Teleradyo's "Usapang de Campanilla," where he provided free legal advice to the public. (Mark Jayson E. Gloria)



Photo by the UP Media and Public Relations Office

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The road to sablay:

Making great strides despite the challenges

For Angelamae Morales, the “road to sablay” is a process taken with meaningful steps, each with value on its own. This dedication led her to finish her undergraduate studies at the top of her class as *summa cum laude*.

True to her philosophy, Morales makes sure to give her best in everything she does. A Laguna native hailing from Calamba City, she did not have lofty objectives in high school. She was more interested in sports and played badminton competitively as part of their school club. But when she came to UPLB, she decided to shift her focus and take her studies more seriously.

She took up BA Sociology, thinking it would better prepare her for law school. Once in UPLB, she brought with her the determination she honed through her time in sports and maximized every learning opportunity in college.

During the pandemic, Morales was not spared from difficulties in her studies. However, her zeal to do her best in everything did not wane and pushed her to try harder. She reminded herself to be consistent and received constant support from her family and friends.

While determined to do well in her studies, she was not afraid to expand her horizons. She joined the UP Alliance of Students Unified for Sociology (UP ASUS), eventually serving as its academic collective head in September 2020. Despite

the limitations of the pandemic, she was able to spearhead online review sessions, symposiums, and webinars, and establish the UP ASUS online academic library. She inspired her colleagues in the organization to pursue academic excellence as she continued to implement the academic tracker for their resident members.

She also continued honing her sports skills as part of the UPLB Badminton Varsity team.

Her leadership and academic performance shone through, and she was inducted into the Pi Gamma Mu and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies.

Through her time at UPLB, she learned the value of being an Iskolar ng Bayan, Para sa Bayan. She became part of various volunteer projects that looked into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agricultural sector and the challenges in public transportation. She also joined storytelling and book drive projects.

Morales readily applied her knowledge and penned papers on social issues and phenomena such as globalization, imperialism, neo-colonialism, oppression, and urban resilience. From all these, she realized the greatest lesson she learned in UPLB: to be courageous enough to stand up for others and help those in need.



With these experiences, she hopes to become a lawyer for the people. To prepare herself, she is now applying for jobs to gain experience and earn money while she is on her “gap year.”

To students who will continue their studies amidst the global pandemic, Morales tells them, “It’s okay to take it slow and take a break.”

For Morales, students should not be too hard on themselves. “What they are experiencing

are not mere personal problems but are rooted in the social ills brought about by systemic problems,” she said.

“I hope that they will not lose hope. I hope that they could find the strength to continue despite the struggles,” she added.

While her “road to sablay” was hindered by various obstacles, Morales’ commitment to excellence and her achievements show that every step forward is worth it. (Juan Paolo A. Aquino)

GS graduates 316 at its 50th commencement



Dela Luna

For the UPLB 50th Commencement Exercises, 316 candidates from the Graduate School (GS) will be receiving their graduate degrees on Aug. 6. This year, 245 will be getting their master’s degrees, while 71 will be officially conferred their doctorate degrees.

Graduates from Master of Science programs number 190, ranking first among the programs according to the number of graduates. This is followed by the Master in Public Affairs program with 25 graduates, and Master of Management with 12 graduates.

Marching this year as the top graduate for the doctoral program is Kim Leonard Guna Dela Luna, PhD Human Nutrition.



Solera

He was supervised by Prof. Ma. Theresa M. Talavera of the Institute of Human Nutrition and Food.

Leading the master’s degree candidates is Elcar John Araneta Solera, MA Communication Arts. He was supervised by Jerry R. Yapo, an associate professor at the Department of Humanities.

Dela Luna and Solera will receive the Academic Excellence Awards. Following them are the Academic Achievement Awardees.

Receiving Academic Achievement Awards under the doctoral program are Ernesto Cordero Collo, PhD Development

Communication; Neilyn Ona Villa, PhD Genetics; Marie Faye Ramirez Nguyen-Orca, PhD Food Science; and Roejae Carlo Andaya Ang, PhD Agricultural Engineering.

Academic Achievement awardees at the master’s level are Argel Lozada Arena, MS Molecular Biology and Biotechnology; Patrick Dagandan Mabbagu, Master of Public Affairs in Strategic Planning and Public Policy; Emerson Ruiz Rico, MS Mathematics; Rehel Almoguerra Diaz, MS Agronomy; Venice Jiezzelle Color Nesperos, MS Forestry specializing in Silviculture and Forest Influences; and Kareen Rae Casida Sernande, MS Animal Science.

The Leadership Award will be given to Kendrick Mico Loresca Faronilo, MS Environmental Science, who is honored for his services to his fellow students and the University through his active involvement in the University Student Council.

Among the Class of 2022 are 37 international graduate students from Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Liberia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

The traditional GS Hooding and Recognition Ceremonies will be held on Aug. 5, a day before the UPLB 50th Commencement Exercises at the Copeland Gymnasium. The program will be streamed live on UPLB’s official Facebook Page and YouTube Channel (@UPLBOfficial). (Kristine E. Aragas)

New UPLB Academic Programs

Associate in Arts in Entrepreneurship

BS Materials Engineering

Master in Animal Nutrition

Master in Clinical Nutrition

Master in Food Engineering

Supreme Court Justice to speak at 2022 GS hooding ceremony

Justice Marvic Mario Victor F. Leonen, senior associate justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, will be the speaker at the 2022 Graduate School (GS) Hooding and Recognition Ceremonies.

Leonen is most notable for his role in sealing the 2012 framework agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front as chief negotiator on behalf of the Philippine Government. These efforts would later serve as the foundation for what would become the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Justice Leonen graduated *magna cum laude* in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in Economics from UP Diliman. He obtained his law degree from the UP College of Law in 1987 and joined the ranks of UP faculty in 1989 as a professional lecturer in Philippine Indigenous Law. He was promoted to assistant professor, then to academic administrator before becoming the UP System's University General Counsel in 2000.

Five years after, he became the first UP Vice President for Legal Affairs. The UP Board of Regents appointed him dean of the UP College of Law in 2008, a position he served with distinction until he was succeeded by current UP President Danilo L. Concepcion in 2011.

Known for his work in environmental activism and community organizing, Leonen co-founded the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center, Inc.-Kasama sa Kalikasan (LRC-KSK) in 1987. LRC-KSK is a legal and policy research and advocacy institution that renders legal services for upland rural poor and indigenous people's communities. Leonen served as LRC-KSK's executive director for 15 years before heading to Columbia University in New York for his Master of Laws degree, which he earned in 2004.

Leonen was appointed associate justice of the Supreme Court in November 2012, the youngest to hold the position post-World War II. He is known for his strict and precise lines of questioning during oral arguments. Leonen has also earned fame on social media for his profound, good-humored, and sometimes poignant advice on love and relationships, which has garnered him the hashtag #LabGuru on Twitter.

The 2022 GS Hooding Ceremony will be the first in-person hooding in UPLB since the beginning of the pandemic. (Albert Geoffred B. Peralta)



Photo by the Supreme Court of the Philippines

Iskos paving the way and sprouting up for greatness



Jugado

set-up. They celebrated milestones from their hard work as students and are now aspiring servants of the people.

Paving the way for his family

Vic, BS Forestry, is the eldest of five siblings, the first one in his family to finish college. He leads graduates of the College of Forestry and Natural Resources as its *summa cum laude*.

Vic did not initially choose to take BS Forestry as his course, but he always had an affinity for the environment and natural resources. After looking up the curriculum once he had been accepted into the program, he grew to love forestry, especially after experiencing on-site fieldwork in various regions in the Philippines. His love for forestry and resource conservation drew him to conduct his thesis on detecting changes in the carbon stocks of mangroves.

But once the pandemic hit in the first semester of his third year, fieldwork and other on-site class activities were put on hold and were replaced by online modular learning. The sudden change in the learning set-up made studying more difficult and caused him mental and emotional stresses.

Despite this, he trudged on, fueled by the support of his family and close friends. While he bore enormous expectations from being the first-born child and the first to graduate from

college in his family, Vic learned to take breaks and occasionally distance himself from responsibilities to manage his stress.

He dedicated himself to attending his synchronous classes while relying only on pocket WiFi and mobile data. He was a consistent University Scholar and excelled in extra-curricular activities, leading the UP Zeta Beta Rho Honor Fraternity on his final year.

Vic dreams of entering academe or focusing on environmental work in local or international organizations. He hopes that through his work, he can clear up public misconceptions regarding forestry and natural resources, such as the regulated and scientific method of logging, and aid in creating government policies that are rooted in practical and scientific methods and vetted by experts.

As he finishes his studies, Vic gives aspiring foresters some advice: "If you're interested in the environment and forests in general, pursue your passion. Forestry is a beautiful and holistic course, and it is rewarding in many ways."

Take the first step, and Sprout Up!

Arvin Joshua P. Barlongo is graduating from the BS Agriculture program with a major in horticulture. Like many of his peers, he had undergone a class in ABME 10 (Foundations of Entrepreneurship), where he was inspired to create an entrepreneurship venture of his own. Where most students stopped after finishing the course, Arvin continued with his idea. He went on to win a PhP 50,000 cash grant from the Kabataang Agribiz Young Farmers Challenge Fund, a financial assistance grant from the Department of Agriculture.

Arvin said that he was not the type to be outspoken in class in elementary school

and had only started using social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube when he saw that there was a need for supplementary materials for the youth who are interested in agriculture.

He developed Sprout Up i6111, a business venture rooted in the values of education, science and research, agriculture, and life. Through his start-up, he was able to sell horticultural crop kits to help beginners and experienced agriculturists and provide both assistance and advice on agriculture even after purchasing the kits.

When asked about the meaning of the name of his start-up, Arvin proudly said that "i6111" stands for the Bible verse Isaiah 61:11, which ends in the quote "Sprout up before all nations."

After starting his social media channels for Sprout Up i6111 in January 2021, his audience steadily grew. He has reached thousands of followers and avid agriculture enthusiasts on YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Spotify, where he can be found as Sprout Up i6111.

As his venture continues to grow, Arvin persists in balancing his studies with his work as a content consultant for various international companies and his business. While juggling all these responsibilities, he even experienced a bout of COVID-19 in the middle of defending his thesis.

Despite all these, he persevered through three and a half years of study and is now graduating *cum laude*.

From his experience, Arvin imparts tidbits of inspiration to future Iskolars ng Bayan: "Take that first step, because you don't know where that first step will take you. [It does not matter] how small it is, [whether that's] picking up the phone or writing down your ideas." (Kristel Hope T. Villafuerte)

The Class of 2022 marks the first face-to-face, albeit limited, graduation ceremony for UPLB since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the past few years, Iskolars have encountered many hurdles in their "road to sablay," which is why graduating this year is sweeter.

Iskos Vicmar F. Jugado and Arvin Joshua P. Barlongo are two such students who have risen above and beyond their circumstances and made the most out of the new learning

Snippets on the PDLC-UPLB partnership



Over the past six years, the COVID-19 pandemic during the last half notwithstanding, President Danilo L. Concepcion (PDLC) has been a regular presence at UPLB. These visits were typified by meetings to update on projects and initiatives that he staunchly supported and championed.

An informal survey of some of the past and current UPLB officials highlights themes of various initiatives implemented in UPLB during the period. Definitely not comprehensive coverage, however, but these give a look-see into how PDLC is as a leader.

Having made a bid for the UP presidency on a promise to pursue and espouse honor and excellence with compassion, it was thus fitting that his programs were hallmarked by this virtue most in demand in these times.

Compassion

To cushion the impact the health crisis had on teaching-learning, the UP administration provided students with internet connectivity and gadgets, and professors with incentives for course pack preparation. Reading breaks were fitted into the academic calendar to allow faculty and students to catch up, focus, and understand the course learning materials. For the rest of the staff, internet subsidies and hazard pay were provided depending on the work arrangement one subscribed to during the highest quarantine level.

Pre-pandemic, PDLC had already implemented policies and programs that alleviated the financial difficulties of students. One of these was the immediate implementation of the Universal Access to Quality Free Tertiary Education as soon as it was signed into law. This despite there being no directive yet on how the law would be implemented.

He mobilized support for a modern and equipped UPLB University Health Service that would benefit not only UPLB constituents and their dependents but also the university's neighboring communities. He got the support of PAGCOR for the project to renovate and upgrade the Operating Room complex and tapped donors from US-based UP alumni organizations to support the project.

Broader access to a UP education

PDLC is a firm believer in providing people increased access to a UP education through the offering of short-term undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Under his term, UPLB gave birth to eight new curricular programs. These are Associate in Arts in Entrepreneurship, BS Mechanical Engineering, BS Materials Engineering, MS Physics, Master in Animal Nutrition, Master in Food Engineering, Master in Clinical Nutrition, and PhD Applied Mathematics. More are in the pipeline, including associate degree programs that will give non-UPCAT passers a chance to complete a two-year program that could then give them an option to pursue a four-year degree program.

Some of the proposed degree programs are in UPLB's traditional fields of expertise and allied areas such as environmental policy, environmental planning, environmental design and management, environmental negotiations and diplomacy, sustainability, resilience, early childhood education, development communication, forestry, data science,

accountancy, fine arts, and architecture. PDLC has also been pushing for the creation of the colleges of education and arts at UPLB.

UPLB is also preparing to offer more graduate degree programs at the UP Professional School for Agriculture and the Environment in Panabo City, Davao del Norte.

Institution development and strengthening

With PDLC's support, UPLB created offices to facilitate internationalization and strengthen not only UPLB but also its partner higher education institutions and allow focused attention on student care as its main mandate.

UPLB elevated the Office of Student Affairs into the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs in February 2020 right before students needed to go back to their homes when the COVID-19 pandemic caused various quarantine measures to be implemented.

UPLB expanded the mandate of the Interactive Learning Center with its reorganization into the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning to lead in the development and management of knowledge products and instruction materials that adapt to changing educational environments.

UPLB also created the Quality Assurance Office to facilitate internationalization initiatives, internal assessment, information process development, database management, and documentation. The newly created Office for Institutional Development in Higher Education, meanwhile, is now supporting state, local, and private universities and colleges all over the country in curriculum development, collaborative research, and faculty and leadership development.

Infrastructure projects and budget allocation

In infrastructure development, PDLC contributed in great measure to UPLB from plan-making to sourcing of funds for big-ticket projects. An important lesson that UPLB officials have learned from him is that decision makers/fund sources are more open to listening to a pitch when they see what the project is for, and its features, and know that the budgetary allocation was not taken out of thin air.

Since 2018, UPLB has been coming up with Detailed Architectural and Engineering Designs to allow scrutiny and come up with a realistic estimate of the cost of proposed infrastructure projects.

Raising funds for these projects is work that PDLC has told UPLB officials is his as the UP president. UPLB only has to come up with a clear plan, justify it well, and if approved, he will take care of looking for the needed funds. To date, PDLC has already provided substantial funds for many big-ticket UPLB infrastructure projects.

The PDLC-UPLB partnership is one that has worked well and has accomplished much for the benefit of UPLB. (Josephine M. Bo)



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