

Vision

TRANSCENDING THE NEW NORMAL: TRANSFORMING UPLB INTO A RESILIENT & INDUSTRY 4.0-RESPONSIVE UNIVERSITY, 2020 to 2023

PROF. FERNANDO C. SANCHEZ, JR., PhD

The COVID-19 crisis is radically and drastically transforming social life in global and historical scales. The pandemic has become the principal basis for many political, economic, cultural and spiritual decisions and has become the dominant backdrop upon which the future is being drawn. The inadvertent consequence is that many structural and policy changes are now being rushed as immediate responses to the crisis without considering a more imminent future beyond the pandemic. It has also fostered a haste towards technological solutions that ignore the conditions in the countryside and remote areas that could only widen the gap between privileged minority and disadvantaged majority.

The University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), with a mandate to serve a leadership and public service role as National University, must avoid these pitfalls.

After more than four months within public health safety quarantines, UPLB has effectively managed the impacts of COVID 19 on the university and its constituents. Still, it suffered disruptions and delays of many of its primary activities similar to other social institutions. The imperative then is to protect our successes and continue initiatives that were hampered by COVID 19. But the next few years must not only be UPLB's response to the unprecedented crisis but must provide a sustainable foundation beyond it.

And so, this is my vision for UPLB: a resilient, globally exceptional university relevant to urgent needs of the time and responsive to the demands of the imminent future. During my first two terms as Chancellor, our team set out three major goals as follows:

1. Sustain academic leadership and excellence
2. Promote the use of UPLB's knowledge and technologies for inclusive growth
3. Create an enabling environment for creativity and innovation

These goals are fundamental goals of UPLB as a national university and therefore remain relevant. However, they must be re-contextualized under emergent conditions and challenges.

1. UPLB as a leader in flexible learning in Agriculture, Forestry, Environmental Science, Engineering, Biotechnology, and Veterinary Science
2. UPLB as a trailblazer in generating environmentally- and socially-responsive technologies, products, and knowledge resources
3. UPLB as a frontrunner in fostering an enabling and nurturing environment that addresses the ever-changing nature of student's and staff's welfare

With these goals, I emphasize three things. First, the pressing challenges of the pandemic only as part of a more long-term, protracted struggle for excellence and relevance. Second, while health goals must be prioritized, it must not be done so at the expense of other issues germane to broader national development goals particularly education, agriculture, biodiversity, and human rights. Third, there is a need to balance between online technological innovations to education and capacity-building with improvements of public access to critical knowledge products.

GOAL 1: UPLB as a leader in flexible learning in Agriculture, Forestry, Environmental Science, Engineering, Biotechnology, and Veterinary Science

The major imperative is to make UPLB responsive to the development and growth of these niches. So far, we made significant strides in these areas with recent achievements and pending academic degree programs including the BS Mechanical Engineering program, BS Culinary Science program, PhD in Applied Math, MS Food Engineering, and MS One Health which are demand-driven program offerings. Aside from offering new academic programs, UPLB must consistently re-align competency targets in tune with the changing requirements of the modern workplace. I will continue to initiate and support venues for the curricular review and upgrading of our courses, and facilitate conversations and collaborations with industry partners towards this end.

The immediate challenge, however, is the need to transition from purely face-to-face to remote learning and flexible learning capacity and environment. This also requires extensive improvements in the capacity of the University to deliver instruction in various modes.

Personnel enhancement and complement

Shifting to flexible learning necessitates enormous capacity building across units and personnel. I therefore aim to reallocate substantial resources for learning opportunities of faculty, staff, and faculty administrators including the need to assign dedicated personnel for flexible learning needs in database management, service interface, and multi-media production. I also plan to provide regular venues for continuing conversations on delivery of critical courses like NSTP and general education subjects.

Technological enhancements

To further our technological capability, material production capacity and strengthen services in support of flexible learning, I will devote substantial resources for massive trainings on Learning Management Systems (LMS) (i.e., MOODLE, EDMODO, CANVAS, etc.) including investments on registration and purchases of these platforms. I also aim to continue the upgrading of UPLB and college libraries to provide online and offline

references for faculty members and students. Furthermore, I plan to increase budget and provide additional facilities to revitalize units that will provide essential flexible learning support services including the UPLB Publications Office (UPO), the Interactive Learning Center (ILC), the Information Technology Center (ITC), the Learning Resource Center (LRC), and the Office of Public Relations (OPR). I also commit to providing additional resources for mass production of course packs, learning resources, and other materials to support remote learning strategies. We must deploy more inclusive and streamlined university websites, and this will also include initiatives to develop other readily accessible platforms or applications for Android and iOS to enable better public access and interaction.

Ensuring access to UPLB education

Flexible learning requires not just technology-based delivery of education but assuring access to education especially for those who do not have technological capability. UPLB's off-campus assets provide strategic resources to facilitate better access to UPLB programs and services in remote areas. This will require enhancing UPLB's satellite units in Panabo City, Davao del Norte; La Granja, La Carlota City, Negros Occidental; Laguna-Quezon and Laguna Land Grants; and Pacdal, Baguio City as remote learning stations. UPLB must also more aggressively pursue its role in capacitating other educational institutions (e.g. SUCs) as a cost-effective strategy to make remote education work in every corner of the country and broaden the public's alternatives to quality education.

GOAL 2: UPLB as a trailblazer in generating environmentally and socially responsive technologies, products, and knowledge resources

So far, UPLB has registered historic milestones in research productivity with a total of Php2.36B research fund generated, 1,236 projects implemented, 1,026 articles published, and 35 books and book chapters since 2017. We intend to build on these past successes by increasing resources and incentives for the staff.

UPLB must continue pursuing breakthrough researches aimed at resolving:

- Covid-19 enigma
- Food and Nutrition Security
- Water Security
- One Health
- Environmental Security

We will also focus on Drug Discovery, Automation, Robotics, and Data Analytics. UPLB will support and initiate new modes of research dissemination to ensure that our knowledge products will be more accessible to remote farmers considering limitations in transportation and geographical mobility (i.e., delivery/shipping of IPB, BIOTECH products to clients).

GOAL 3: UPLB as a frontrunner in fostering an enabling and nurturing environment that addresses the ever-changing nature of student's and staff's welfare

UPLB's investment on the modernization of the University Health Service (UHS), dormitories, campus connectivity, and utilities provided important advantages in the management of the campus during the community quarantines and also provided a foundation towards UPLB 4.0. These existing initiatives must be pursued to greater fruition.

In campus management and community affairs, we hope to provide Accessible Quality Health and Wellness Services.

In administration where the digitalization of services remains important challenges, we will pursue Paperless Transactions.

In student services, we will enhance existing Student Affairs Services and offer new ones to promote student's welfare and development.

Fostering an enabling and nurturing environment also necessitates the completion and upgrade of various ongoing infrastructure projects as well as implementation of new ones. The following are some of the ongoing infrastructure projects:

- Graduate Students Dormitory
- Library and Knowledge Center
- Nanoscience and Technology Building
- Extension, Renovation and Rehabilitation of Agricultural and Bio -process Division Building
- Philippine Tropical Forest Science Building Phase 2
- University Health Service Extension Phase 1
- AMTEC Testing Shed
- Green Latrine
- Controlled Environment Research Facility
- Orchids Laboratory Building
- Philippine Genome Center for Agriculture
- NPGRL Quarantine Greenhouse
- DZLB Transmitter Antenna
- Completion of Technology Hub and One-Stop Shop Phase 2

Budget allocation will be secured for physical growth, along with demands for new incentive packages and staff support mechanisms like communication and transportation subsidies. Such welfare initiatives must, however, be pursued not just within or by UPLB but as part of greater UP System aspiration. I will support necessary lobbying actions and representations for better government appropriation on staff welfare not just for UPLB constituents but across UP and other government offices. This will boost morale and confidence among public servants in a time when we need them to lead more resolutely.

My pursuit for a third term is earnest and sincere for the long-term interest of UPLB. I believe that in a time of extraordinary crisis such as the one we face today, it is crucial to continue the work building upon the accomplishments of the past and optimizing the experience and lessons of the present. More so, we must look beyond this crisis and well across the visible horizon of the future. Together, let us make UPLB the best university it can be.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'fcs', is positioned above the printed name.

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