

## **UPLB AS A GLOBAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY: TOWARDS A VISION OF A “SILICON VALLEY FOR AGRICULTURE AND RELATED INDUSTRIES”**

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The University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) is a very influential constituent unit of the University of the Philippines System with a significant role in our country’s struggle for food sufficiency and inclusive economic development. UPLB has achieved a brilliant record in academic excellence with a strong commitment to the search for new knowledge.

The daunting challenge now rests upon the next Chancellor who must be able to successfully revitalize UPLB as a Global Research University towards a vision of leadership and relevance in a highly-disruptive, dynamic, competitive, digitized, and globally-interconnected academic environment. **My vision for UPLB is focused on the grand pursuit of organizing the University around a “Silicon Valley” type of development that shall attract agricultural and technology companies to leverage on UPLB’s expertise in agriculture and other disciplines while enjoying tax relief and other incentives within the declared UPLB Economic Zone, in line with Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE), as supported by the well-established Science Community, as well as the local and national government agencies, whose constituents shall in turn benefit from the inclusive development goals of this entire revitalization exercises. At the core of which, is UPLB’s academic, research and management expertise.**

The paramount order of the day is to expand the measly budget of UPLB through an **endowment fund that will ensure UPLB’s future as an academic and research institution**. The best universities in the world that have survived through the years are those that are well endowed.

There is a **great demand for the next UPLB Chancellor to be a visionary**. More than the role of simply managing the day-to-day academic operations of UPLB, its top academic leaders must look beyond the existing geographic units of UPLB, and **envision a non-geographic, online campus** that blends and weaves all the strengths and capabilities of every constituent academic, research and administrative unit into a potent synergy of intellectual resources using the platform of the digital information highway.

**Aside from harnessing the potentials of the University in the fields of agriculture and education, as an IT advocate, I see a lot of potentials of UPLB in the fields of information science, technology, development communication, and eLearning**. Having served as a former President of the Philippine National eLearning Association (PNEA), I have no doubt that the University is capable of establishing a niche in this area.

There is so much that UPLB can do for the region and for the nation as it assumes a new role in establishing the Philippines' "**Silicon Valley for Agriculture**" in the Southern part of Luzon. It is in this aspect that the expertise and experience of UPLB faculty, researchers, students, and the rest of the University's human resources shall matter most. As we inevitably welcome the Internet of Things (IoT) and other technology advancements, UPLB has that distinct role in defining the academic boundaries and depths by which such technologies and scientific applications shall fit into the University's curricular offerings in order to develop knowledge and skills that can be put to meaningful use in the industries.

I see hubs for start-up agri-tech companies; new patents for water and environmental technologies, food science, and crop genetics; the revitalized agri-processing zones; and a vibrant venue for agricultural science and engineering research outputs harnessed through active partnership between the University and the various industries.

I see greater potentials of UPLB following the models of **Colorado State University** that claims to have helped build "start-ups and patenting companies in the Colorado Front Range focused on new technologies in irrigation, food science and plant genetics"; and the **Wageningen University** in relation to the Dutch Food Valley which is "a known powerhouse for growing vegetables, dairy products, and poultry processing."

Close to home, in Taiwan, the **National Chiao Tung University** and the **National Tsing Hua University**, both helped propel the Hsinchu Science Park or Taiwan's Silicon Valley that produced Acer and Taiwan's Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (TSMC), two well-known global brands that have not only created hundreds of thousands of jobs but now serve to prop up Taiwan's economy. Notably, Taiwan is also the host country of The World Vegetable Center which is associated with the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center (AVRDC), a research institution once headed by our very own former UPLB Chancellor and 17<sup>th</sup> UP President Emil Q. Javier.

Another country that is also pushing its own Silicon Valley type of development strategies is Vietnam and its officials hope to do it through strong educational support, entrepreneurial spirit and government initiatives. Vietnam is positioning itself as a Center for Innovation, Research and Development. One strong point of Vietnam is that the country's universities are producing highly innovative and tech-savvy workforce whether in Agriculture, IT and other related disciplines. **Vietnam's science and technology universities in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, and Da Nang** are collaborating to turn their dream of a "Southeast Asian Silicon Valley" into a reality. According to Vietnam's Director of the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD) Nguyen Do Anh, "Science and Technology applications in agricultural production need the engagement of not only the state and scientific research organizations, but also the participation of farmers and businesses. In fact, businesses play a growing role in raising the sector's

technology level while increasing farmers' access to hi-tech applications." According to national targets, by 2020 Vietnam will be home to 200 hi-tech agricultural businesses and 10 hi-tech agricultural zones.

It is important to **strengthen the already vibrant UPLB research and publication culture** where faculty, students and researchers are not just allowed but are likewise provided institutional support to do research and publish their works in reputable journals. The University must cultivate strong industry linkages so that the products of the academe are well-utilized and find practical applications. Most importantly, the graduates of the UPLB must be able to compete in the global market and a strong research background aligned with industry needs will give them that edge.

UPLB plays a very strategic role in our country's pursuit for economic progress and sustainable development. The University serves as the wellspring of competent human resources honed to achieve their full academic potentials and creativity in order that they may positively contribute and become part of the solutions to many of our country's woes.

**I would like to highlight the role of UPLB in expanding the value chain of agriculture, and ensuring that its faculty, researchers and students are not only focused on the core courses of agricultural production but on the business and entrepreneurial side as well as the entire value chain that would encourage more people to pursue agricultural courses** made relevant by the technology courses, marketing and distribution strategies that come with it, as well as the subjects that will allow students and graduates to appreciate and practice both backward and forward integration of agriculture.

Another area where I see UPLB can make a strong impact is in the fields of Aquaculture and Marine Studies. Laguna de Bay with an area of 900 square kilometers and around 41 kilometers long, is a very important inland body of freshwater supported by 21 tributaries. The whole of Laguna, is also a very scenic spot with all the mountains, hot springs and water resources. **From an academic institution's point of view, these are not just good reasons for UPLB to open formal eco-tourism and hospitality management courses, but also a natural attraction to explore and establish strong fisheries, aquatic research, and marine studies, perhaps in collaboration with expert faculty and researchers from UP Visayas.**

**For UPLB to continue marching towards the apex of a globally-recognized research university committed to excellent service to the nation, the following mission and development goals must be pursued:**

- **1. Promote quality instruction through a comprehensive review of its course offerings and teaching methodologies and give focus on critical**

thinking, creativity, technological skills, research, publication, and other academic competencies;

- **2. Enhance the research and publication capabilities** of its faculty, staff, and students ensuring that they pass peer-reviewed and/or refereed publication requirements both at national and international levels;
- **3. Strengthen and modernize extension services** to geographic and online communities;
- **4. Increase partnerships** with local organizations, government agencies, and reputable private entities to help **broaden knowledge, skills and values that protect the natural environment** and promote the achievement of sustainable development in the region;
- **5. Continue to expand linkages with global academic institutions** and key industries

I shall conduct an institutional audit and **review the University's academic/research programs which should be benchmarked with the best universities in the world.** Food engineering, genetic engineering, biotechnology, nano technology, environmental risk and disaster management, atmospheric science, entrepreneurship and other important fields are worth looking into.

Should I be given the opportunity to serve as the chief steward of UPLB, I shall hold a **visioning exercise and strategic planning session** with key resource persons and stakeholders to **chart UPLB's Development Plan** towards a meaningful Bicentennial to be celebrated not by us but by our future generations. Such plan must enable UPLB to create national and international impact as a globally-competitive academic research institution. Of course, **it is vital that this is pursued in close working relationship with the UP President.**

The integrity, proper use and preservation of UPLB campus, land grants and administered properties which include the Makiling forest reserve will have to be a priority in terms of maintaining security, protection, and sustainable development. I intend to strengthen **UPLB's Research and Development Foundation** for the main purpose of providing more funds for academic researches, refereed journals and publication, scholarships, faculty development, and student exchange.

I shall also work for **UPLB's certification under the International Standards Organization (ISO);** accreditation with **ABET;** and continue its active participation in the **Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings. These are real measures of being a globally-competitive higher learning and research institution.**

I shall spearhead a **Chancellor's Committee for the Promotion of the Arts and Natural History** which will work with the local government and tourism industry. The Philippine High School for the Arts in Makiling and the UPLB Museum of Natural History are institutions that need support and must be shared with the rest of the nation.

I believe in life-long learning. I noted the very strong graduate program in UPLB that can work well as a **Professional Graduate Studies and Continuing Education Center** that shall oversee the implementation of world class research-based graduate programs with strong international academic partnership. This will provide local residents in the region a cost-efficient option and access to competitive post-graduate and professional training. The world is dynamic and the things people must learn keep on changing. I shall pursue this along an industry-based program where substantial hours of the coursework and thesis/dissertation programs are aligned with the requirements of the various industries and identified industry partners.

**UPLB Center for Entrepreneurship** is a service unit which can help the UPLB Community and other Southern Luzon residents develop, in partnership with the LGUs, their entrepreneurial skills so that they can have alternative sources of income.

I envision a subsidized **Professional Review Center** for UPLB students as well as local residents who need to ensure that they pass professional examinations in order to practice their professions.

As a former professor and college secretary at the UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations (UP-SOLAIR), I intend to creatively work on the expansion of benefits of the faculty, staff and retirees. I will work hard for the strengthening of the **UPLB employee's cooperative organization** so it can expand the benefits and privileges of UPLB faculty and employees via programs focused on health insurance, housing, dependent's education, entrepreneurial trainings, and emergency loans. I shall also work so that we can continue to tap the skills and talents of UPLB retirees and allow for their dependents to have access to the institution that they once served. This can be done by establishing a ***Samahan ng mga Empleyado at Gurong Retirado sa UPLB (SEGURADO sa UPLB)***.

Hopefully, at the end of my term as UPLB Chancellor, **I would have addressed the needs of the most important resource of the University, and have likewise sown the seeds of excellence in academic research which shall allow UPLB to achieve higher global recognition and be able to contribute to a more inclusive national development.**

UPLB Chancellorship is all about a sense of **shared governance responsibility**. It must be **open, transparent, and provide direct access** to UPLB constituents. I have been a UPLB Student Council Chairman, All UP Workers Union member, administrative staff, researcher, junior faculty, and professor before becoming an Academic Administrator. I will humbly bring this wealth of experience forward should I, God willing, be chosen as the next UPLB Chancellor.