

Future-Proofing UPLB: A Vision-Mission Statement

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My vision of "**future-proofing UPLB**" is about sustaining UPLB's relevance by developing methods, approaches and framework to minimize the cost and impacts of shocks of future events. Future-proofing UPLB in its leadership in knowledge-creation, research utilization and public service initiatives is ambitious, for in the context of limited resources, dwindling government funds and disruptions due to pandemic and climate change, the challenges which we must all face demand for such a vision. Right now, we are already experiencing the huge impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on how we teach, do research and engage our communities to utilize the knowledge we created to promote public good.

At the national level, the Covid-19 global pandemic has exacerbated our tasks of alleviating poverty and unemployment, ensuring food security and raising income and productivity. Against the backdrop of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the pandemic has also unmasked the greater problem of digital divide that further hampers one's access to quality education, work and other livelihood opportunities. In the midst of technological progress are the many pending issues on labor and migration, family relations and socio-political cohesion, and the challenges in achieving UN sustainable development goals (SDGs). With these stresses and uncertainties, it is important that UPLB is future-proof and lays-down a strong foundation to anticipate and adapt to change and confront the "next normal" head-on with sheer determination and resolve.

How do I envision a future-proof UPLB and see its impact on local and global society?

I envision a future-proof UPLB as it levels up its recognition as one of the leading regional and global universities **regardless of the mode of delivery of our services.**

UPLB will continue as a bastion of innovation, knowledge-generation and as a center for lifelong-learning and public service initiatives. Its cutting-edge research will be utilized for the influence and benefits it shall cause people as they enlarge opportunities to pursue their goals for **recovery, development and social transformation.** UPLB's leadership in knowledge creation shall spur significant change and impact on public good. Imbued with the values of honor, excellence and **compassion** (malasakit), UPLB's constituents will inspire one another to work collectively, support and care for the welfare and safety of community members to celebrate and reward the achievement of this vision.

Our strategic plan

Our inspiration and at the heart of our plans are our students, faculty and staff, our alumni and stakeholders and for the betterment of our Filipino people. We will be unified by our values and pride of place where we all can do great things for our university, our community and our country. We will be the "university of choice" where fairness, inclusion, collegiality and diversity are valued and dearly upheld. We will actively recruit the "best and brightest", support investments in the wellbeing and lifelong-learning skill formation of our precious human capital - our students, faculty and all staff members. We will instill among our students the value of

creativity and critical thinking and provide them with facilities and enabling environment to fully develop their potentials.

Our core values of honor, excellence and compassion cause us to implement the plan with great caution and due diligence, while lifelong-learning (instruction), research and innovation, public good and social welfare, and global engagement fortify the things that we do.

Future-proofing our human resources

Our overall strategy will revolve around the elements of the UPLB universe, our people: the teaching and non-teaching academic personnel, the students, and the administrative and support staff. Their overall wellness and safety will be our priority. For this, **effective communication** is key. Through regular dialogues with our students, faculty, staff and all stakeholders, we will be able to receive accurate and relevant pieces of information that will determine our plans and actions to ensure that everybody is safe and coping well with the huge impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic or any untoward event.

We will encourage our students' free intellectual expression and mental creativity. We will endeavor to provide a pleasant atmosphere that will inspire mature and productive interaction between the faculty and the students. We will keep in mind that most UPLB students are on their own while pursuing their degrees and learning their courses. We will thus be aware of their personal well-being, physical and mental. We will not countenance outside forces to interfere with the students' search for identity and pursuit of ideology. We will offer the students direct access to the services the University is equipped to provide them. We will create a mechanism such that important issues and concerns the students put on the table for discussion can be given prompt attention and speedy action. We will prioritize the inclusion of the Student Union in our infrastructure modernization. We will transform this building as a central hub where students can freely congregate. We will provide physical spaces for group and individual interactions. The SU building will also be provided with service stalls and convenience shops that will cater to the needs of our students.

We will always be supportive of measures that will mitigate the difficulties being encountered by the frontline staff as they report for work amidst the pandemic. We will provide all the safety modalities that will insulate every office and field worker against communicable diseases, specifically Covid-related viruses. We will endeavor to find ways by which contractual workers can be regularized and given security of tenure. We will keep the communication lines to the rank and file always open so that feedbacks about administrative concerns can be gathered and given prompt attention. Dialogues and consultation will be encouraged to ensure that grievances will not fester and be a source of discontentment.

We will harness the participation of the Alumni in areas that could be mutually beneficial. One area is the commercialization of mature UPLB technologies. As UPLB graduates inevitably have to confront the diminished opportunity for employment due to the economic downturn due to pandemic, the help of our alumni will be sought. On the job trainings and tutoring on micro-entrepreneurship are areas where established alumni could be helpful in providing income generating opportunities to the Universities new graduates. We will enjoin the alumni to support

our plan to propagate the culture of entrepreneurship among our graduates. Alternatively, alumni will be invited as occasional seminar speakers to supplement classroom learnings.

Future-proofing lifelong-learning and instruction system

The disruption of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is an opportunity to reshape the way we assess our students and future-proof their skills and talents. We will future-proof them as we prepare them for an increasingly data-science-led and digitally-complex world that demand dexterity and computing skills. We will provide them with a conducive environment for flexible learning through combinations of remote, adaptive and blended learning at an intensified scale.

We will enhance the quality of our flexible learning system and teaching methods and enrich the acquisition of ethical, entrepreneurial, critical thinking and digital skills of our students to boost their employability and nurture their interdisciplinary, lifelong-learning skills and global perspectives. We will intensify their experience, engage them with transformative academic and co-curricular activities imbued with social responsibility and accountability.

For instance, the Learning Resource Center (LRC) and Interactive Learning Center (ILC) will be merged and reorganized into a new Center for Teaching-Learning Excellence (CTLE). It will be established to design instructional methods and innovative approaches in delivering our educational, academic-related and co-curricular services.

We will continue to upgrade the level of expertise and competence of our academic staff by vigorously pushing for a continuing education program. This will be anchored on local and foreign scholarships that we will pursue within the ambit of the existing exchange programs with prestigious foreign universities.

We will nurture a Mentoring System wherein junior faculty and researchers will be paired and partnered with experienced and senior academics. We will encourage the symbiotic sharing of knowledge and capability through the osmosis pervading in the classrooms and laboratories.

We will endeavor to seek more resource-endowed academic partners with whom UPLB has active Memorandum of Understanding to come to UPLB. We will host them as they serve as tools for intellectual hybridization. This strategy is more cost-effective aside from being a vehicle for knowledge multiplication.

Future-proofing our research and innovation system

UPLB is known for its research-breakthroughs. It builds a record of path-breaking basic, applied and interdisciplinary research, convening several groups of experts across fields of specializations. A significant number of the country's national scientists, academicians, former cabinet secretaries, and professional society, research and industry leaders are affiliated with UPLB.

Future-proofing research and innovation in UPLB means that we will explore new models of resource generation as we invest in digital futures, our large-scale, University-wide program of leading research on the transformative potential of digital technology, and build skills and

infrastructure in the development and application of data analytics and other digital research skills.

We will lobby for greater public sector budgetary support as we amplify our research profile and position UPLB to produce the “next in-thing, the next big ideas” in ensuring good governance, water, nutrition and food security and agricultural modernization, in the study of climate and data science, artificial intelligence and robotics. Guided with strategic value-chain frameworks and approaches, we will encourage research partnerships with industry leaders and mobilize collaborations with the private sector that will address major challenges in the industry and major production sectors of farming, fishery and forestry.

The quality of our research and innovation will be enhanced by attracting and retaining the “best and the brightest” scientific-minded individuals, allowing them to engage with local problems and global challenges. We will design an incentive system that will enable new ideas and discoveries to thrive and be tested in finding solutions to our complex economic and environmental problems. We will transform the scale of our intellectual property commercialization activity, bringing capabilities together, engaging staff and establishing entrepreneurship as a defining feature of the UPLB experience for students such that all have the opportunity to develop their capacities and potentials.

Future-proofing our commitment to public good and social welfare

We will future-proof UPLB as a leader for in enhancing social impact by engaging our communities in our work, enabling our people to help bring about a better world and embedding responsible processes and environmental sustainability in our key programs and activities. We will address social and environmental challenges through our research, teaching and learning, public engagement, and campus operations.

We will be recognized as a **caring** university that creates opportunities for our whole community through transformative education, research and engagement. We will be a global exemplar for pioneering community collaborations that deliver health, social, environmental and economic benefits for all with a clear sense and pride of place and purpose.

Future-proofing our global engagement

As a globally-engaged and future-proof university, we will sustain our lead as one of the top regional and global universities, attracting high-quality international staff and students, and undertaking research of world-class standing and global impact. We will position UPLB to continue to thrive in an increasingly internationalized higher education and research sector by communicating the distinctive benefits we bring to the world.

We will engage our staff and students, mobilize our alumni and partners around the world as influential advocates for our activities. We will develop a focused portfolio of partnerships to reflect the University’s interests around the world, extending our existing commitments and cementing diverse relationships through joint or collaborative postgraduate opportunities, sustained research programs, staff and student mobility, and other initiatives.

Future-proofing the University: Enabling UPLB meet the challenges ahead

The disruptions and displacements brought forth by the pandemic are real and daunting. They have become juggernauts that unless tackled squarely, will severely impact in the way knowledge is dispensed, in the way researches are conducted, and in the way students are reared and educated.

UPLB bears the mandate of carrying out its tri-functions of instruction, research and extension. For it to perform such, it must fortify itself in order to overcome the hurdles along its way. More than ever, what UPLB demands at this juncture is a strong academic and administrative leadership. The same leadership must be employed in battling the impediments of the present pandemic environment. Such leadership must likewise prepare the whole academic community in meeting the unforeseen challenges of the future.

The challenges that UPLB must face are written on the wall. Foremost of these are the necessities of devising new methods of teaching, formulating research protocols that are health safety compliant, and performing the University's liaison with the outside public in the midst of restricted movements. Covid-induced prohibitions, aggravated by the absence of an immediate remedy have made such changes inevitable.

As I aspire to lead UPLB and provide it with a roadmap towards achieving its goals, I will be guided by this clear vision: **that vision is of a future-proofed University that has regained its exalted position as a respected center of academic excellence and peopled by highly educated faculty and learned academicians. That vision of UPLB encompasses its treasured students whose welfare is fully-minded and whose needs are well-provided. That vision includes a thriving academic community where the spirit of compassion is pervasive and palpable in all aspects of human interaction.**