The passage of the University of the Philippines Charter in 2008 ushered in a new era for the University. The new charter declared the University of the Philippines as the National University and made provisions for UP to maintain this stature. Some notable provisions in the new UP charter include the guarantees for academic freedom and institutional autonomy, authority to make its own compensation plan for its faculty and staff, tax exemptions of revenues and donations for educational purposes and various means for generation of income for the University. The charter also mandated the University of the Philippines to perform its unique and distinctive leadership role in Philippine higher education specifically on the following functions; in setting academic standards, in training and learning in leadership and responsible citizenship, in promoting the welfare of its personnel and in serving as a research, graduate and public service university.

The University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) is a constituent university of the UP System and was established by the Board of Regents in 1979 with a mandate to be the regional university for the Visayas and the national center for fisheries and marine sciences. In the 2009 strategic review of UPV, the External Review Team affirmed the mandate of UPV for the regions and expanded its national responsibility to be the center for fisheries and aquatic sciences.

The question to be asked is how can UPV fulfill its mandate for the regions and the nation and be the National University we can be proud of. The Chancellor, as its Chief Executive Officer, shall play a key role and provide leadership in achieving the tasks mandated for UP Visayas.

Instruction

UPV can serve the needs of the Visayan regions and the country by offering excellent curricular programs in the fields of fisheries, science and technology, arts and humanities, social sciences, education and management. These curricular programs should be regularly reviewed and updated to be responsive to the requirements of students in the 21st century. One example is the academic programs of Professional Education which could enhance the capacity of the teachers in the regions especially in the teaching of the basic sciences, mathematics and English. Another is the curricular programs of UPV in fisheries which should set the standards for fisheries education in the country. Faculty members of state colleges and universities offering courses in fisheries would greatly benefit if they obtain their graduate degrees from UPV. Through the offering of excellent graduate degree programs, UPV would be able to fulfill its mandated role of a graduate university.
Aside from offering excellent curricular programs, UPV should have highly qualified faculty to teach these programs. The University should actively search for the best and brightest graduates of the UP system and other highly respected universities and entice them to join its teaching staff through an attractive compensation package and opportunities for graduate training. Modern lecture rooms and fully-equipped laboratories should be provided to serve as an ideal learning environment for UPV students. The library facilities of UPV should be upgraded and modernized.

Research

UPV as a research university should be able to create new knowledge to address pressing problems in the countryside like poverty, low productivity, overexploitation of resources and environmental degradation. To be relevant, UPV’s research programs should be aligned with the medium and long-term Philippine development plan as well as with the Millennium Development Goals related to food security, health, gender equality and environmental sustainability. There should be close collaboration between the academe and private sector so that studies implemented are responsive to the needs of the industry. Researches should also be conducted to preserve and enrich the Visayan cultural heritage. There should be multi-disciplinary teams to conduct multi-disciplinary researches to find solutions to the multi-faceted problems of our society. The Integrated Coastal Management Program of UPV is a good example of the multi-disciplinary approach to research.

The University should create an environment conducive for the conduct of research by its faculty and researchers. Additional incentives should be given to researchers that are able to publish in journals listed in the Science Citation Index and Social Science Citation Index since these are high-impact and highly cited journals. To encourage more publication, priority for UPV In-house research funds will be given to researchers with a good publication record of their research grants. Increased support should be extended for research dissemination in international fora and conferences. For researchers, there should be easy access to the different laboratories in UPV. An equipment fund should be maintained for immediate repair of damaged equipment in the laboratories. Active sourcing from funding agencies like the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Agriculture should be done to replace outmoded equipment and to procure other requirements of the laboratories. There should be a mentoring system where well-published faculty members would give advice to young researchers on how to conduct proper researches and publish in peer-reviewed journals.

Extension

As mandated in the new UP Charter, UPV as a public service university must be able to provide various forms of community and volunteer services as well as scholarly and technical assistance to the government, private sector and
civil society. At the national level, UPV should be able to contribute to the development of national strategic plans especially in the areas of fisheries and aquatic sciences. For the Visayan regions, UPV should be an active participant in the Regional Development Council (RDC) and should extend its expertise in the formulation and implementation of the plans and programs of the RDC. At the community level, the University should focus its technical assistance and extension services in areas where UPV campuses are located such as Miagao, Iloilo City and Tacloban City. An example is the assistance provided by UPV to the Southern Iloilo Coastal Resource Management Council for the protection and conservation of coastal resources in five municipalities of Southern Iloilo.

UPV should develop a comprehensive extension program in order to have an integrated and holistic approach in delivering services to its clientele. Multi-disciplinary teams composed of experts from different colleges should be created to address the problems of the industry. Logistical support should be provided to UPV experts if they are requested to help in impoverished areas.

Resource Generation

Funds, aside from appropriations from the national government, should be generated by the University to be able to implement its programs. In Miagao, there are more than 500 hectares of idle lands that can be utilized to generate income. A multi-disciplinary team should be constituted to study ways to maximize the earning potential of the idle lands in Miagao. There are also assets of UPV which are potential sources of revenues like the aquaculture and processing facilities as well as the analytical laboratories which can be harnessed for income generation activities.

UPV can get financial and material support through linkages with national agencies like the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and foreign institutions like the US Agency for International Aid (USAID), German Development Agency (GIZ), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the WorldFish Center (WFC). The College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (CFOS) was able to get support of more than 5 million pesos from CHED to improve its facilities and purchase equipment when it was awarded as Center of Excellence in Fisheries Education and as the National College of Fisheries. The College also acquired a new L-300 van from its CIDA-funded project. At present, CFOS is implementing a three-year research program on shrimps with financial support amounting to P37 million from DOST.

The alumni of the universities in the US like Harvard and Yale has been their main source of endowment funds. This can be done for UPV if we can strengthen our alumni affairs office and we have active alumni associations from the different colleges of the University. The University should implement a systematic campaign to reach its alumni using information and communication technology as well as mass media. The UPV website is a powerful tool for
mobilizing the resources of our alumni if we can show the achievements of UPV and provide a listing of projects that the alumni can support. In the UPV website, there should be a menu of projects that the alumni can choose to sponsor such as professorial chairs, scholarship grants for our students, improvement of laboratories and lecture rooms or donations of computers and laboratory equipment.

Faculty, Staff and Student Welfare

For faculty development, UPV must be able to identify the expertise and specialization needed to support its academic programs. A comprehensive faculty development program should be implemented to fill the gaps in expertise and to find replacement of retiring faculty members. Funding support from UPV and scholarship grants from external agencies must be obtained to enable our faculty to obtain graduate degrees up to the doctoral level. In Miagao campus, the construction of housing units through loans from PAGIBIG or GSIS will greatly benefit the faculty and discourage the “teach and go practice”.

The REPS and administrative staff are considered the neglected sectors in UPV because of the difficulty of promoting them in comparison to the faculty. UPV-wide committees, one composed of REPS and another composed of administrative staff, should be constituted to study strategies on how to improve their financial status. These strategies could include training for entrepreneurial skills and accessing credit from lending institutions, skills training from TESDA for unemployed spouses of the administrative staff and other possible income generation activities.

For student welfare, UPV should provide scholarship grants and other forms of financial assistance so that financially needy but qualified students could avail of a UP education. Improved remedial measures should be instituted so that students with poor high school background would survive the rigors of UP academic standards. The Office of Student Affairs should be strengthened to provide an expanded and enriched guidance and counseling services for the students. Dormitory and recreational facilities should be improved, especially in Miagao campus where city amenities are not available. Funding support should be extended to student cultural groups like the UPV Hublag and UPV Choristers to serve as venues for expression of the creative talents of students.

Governance

Governance in the University should be characterized by collegiality, representation, accountability, transparency and participation of its constituents. An open consultation with the constituents should be conducted before a major decision will be made that could directly affect them. There should be a feedback mechanism in the University in which its constituents can react and give comments and recommendations on university policies and procedures.
The bureaucratic procedures in UPV should be simplified to facilitate processing of documents such as requests and appointments. Information technology should be fully harnessed to reduce the amount of paper work. The procurement process should be studied to determine the causes of delays in the purchase of supplies and equipment and corrective measures should be instituted. Monitoring should be done to reduce inefficiency and wastage in the use of university resources especially on utilities like water and electricity.

The University should conduct capacity-building training for its officials, from the Department Chair up to the Chancellor, to enhance their leadership and management skills. This training is essential to academic administrators since they are mostly experts in their discipline and have little management background. Training sessions on university policies and procedures, dealing with people and conflict resolution would be important in the administration of academic units. This training should be done on a continuing basis so that academic administrators would be updated on new developments in the management of an educational institution.

UPV has the intellectual resources and material assets to fulfill its mandate for the Visayan regions and the nation. Through the cooperation and concerted efforts of everyone in UPV, from the administrative aide and up to the Chancellor, we can have a National University we can truly be proud of.