LEADING AN INSTITUTION IN TURMOIL:
RESTORING HONOR AND RELEVANCE
(A Vision-Action Statement)

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Rationale

I grew up with UP since c. 1971-72, and I have heard of many visions. Unfortunately, I will deviate from the traditional endearment. My simple vision is anchored on a Biblical preamble:¹ “I, Wisdom, was created before everything else… Learn this great fact of life: A life of doing right is the wisest life there is… Determination to be wise is the first step towards becoming wise… And with your wisdom, develop common sense and good judgment.”

Excellent public service! Excellent education! Excellent research! You may have encountered these pronouncements a countless number of times already. Read the dazzling billboards and magazines. Are these for real or just Shakespeare’s modern rendition of “fury and sound signifying nothing”?

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the modern world of irrelevance, the era of hypes, hyperbole, and alarmism! If I am known to you as some “mean” or “negative” person, please do forgive. Nowadays, truth-seekers are the ones being persecuted; I leave this matter to your good judgment.

Today, I am preoccupied with a strategy to reverse UPV’s trek of retrogression. However, at the start, we need to level with one another: If you desire as much as I do for UPV to redeem its past glory then, in all fairness and honesty, be REAL. UPV is supposed to be an excellent center for quality education, a model, and leader for the rest to follow. But, what is UPV known for?² This is UPV Problem Made Simple. The rest are details, and I bequeath their discussions to your imagination. UPV has plunged into a dark age. Thus, it is either that we reform the University or continue dishonoring it with unprecedented complacency, cowardice and irresponsibility.

My vision is about hope.

The Challenge

“No empire will rise on a rotten foundation,” and UPV has strewn its foundation. The University lost focus and pursued virtual objectives that alienated it from its true mission. This is a product of deeply rooted problems. Accordingly, the main task of the new administrator is to tackle these problems in order to re-direct the institution back to its mission. No matter what, a UPV that is out-of-shape will accomplish nothing but plain show.

¹ Book of Proverbs
² Do not despair if you do not have any ready answer to this question.
Where to go?

“Tuwid na daan lang, po!” First of all, let us recover our “lost” mandate. Presidential Decree 1200 (1977) leading to Executive Order 628 (1980) stipulated the creation of an integrated UPV that is based on “food and marine sciences” – not “fisheries and marine science,” as we were all made to believe. To where the misconception (deception?) has led us and at what cost is yet untold. Simultaneously, EO 628 clarified that the “flagship” concept was nonexistent. Again, just to what extent this misnomer has cost the University cannot be told. These prompt realizations are crucial if UPV is to proceed with a unified drive to fulfill its mandate.

What can be done?

A striven foundation requires plenty of work, and not all the work may be accomplished within a short period. However, certain down-to-earth tasks are doable and can be pursued with great success.

1. **Improve instruction**

   Are students the central concern in UPV? Make no mistake- UPV is a university and not a research laboratory! Quality education must be the guiding spirit of the University; hence, the preoccupation must be about producing quality instruction, not research projects. At the same time, existing (ignored) problems related to curricula and pedagogy must be resolved. Teaching evaluation, one weak point of the University, must be made a priority consideration. Training/enrichment programs for aspiring instructors must aim towards obtaining degrees with classroom trainings and not degrees by projects (research).

2. **Improve instructional facilities**

   UPV is a service institution that must deliver quality services to its clients, the learners. University resources are committed for this prime purpose. Therefore, apart from manpower resources, there must be adequate instructional facilities to support all learning activities. Particularly, these facilities must be made accessible for students’ use.

3. **Improve the learning atmosphere**

   Learning prospers tremendously in a conducive environment. Students must be provided with the proper avenues and the opportunities for growth. Their freedom to think and expression must not be curtailed by unnecessary restrictions. They deserve due trust and respect. Students may need recreation. They may need comfort for their problems. They need thoughtful medical care as much as they need a secured campus. They need a healthy environment as much as they need food! The Dean of Students shall be one busy person in the campus. He is one who will need a service vehicle.

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3 The state of UPV education may be gleaned from this work: Baleña, R. 2011. The Recent Plight of Fisheries Education at the University of the Philippines in the Visayas, Miagao, Iloilo. UP in the Visayas, Miagao, Iloilo, 85 pp.

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There shall be no civil and academic oppressions (especially of students) under my watch. I know no friends when it comes to offense.

4. *Provide the means for improved interactions*

Teachers must struggle for their own improvement, too. Faculties must indulge in all forms of discourses possible, and they must lead students into scholarly modes of interactions such as debates, fora, or workshops. Let there be regular theatrical shows, concerts, sport events, movies and talents shows—anything that will promote healthy interaction and the wholesome growth of an individual.

5. *Cut “via satellite” communications*

Miagao is the base of UPV, and it shall be the center of all school activities. As much as possible, let those city-based offices be moved to Miagao. Let everyone understand the concept of home, so that appreciation will grow about the concept of belongingness. At the same time, the recourse will cut on transport cost due to UPVs ubiquitous vehicles.

6. *Impose frugality and wise spending*

We will rationalize the administration with regards its functions, budget, and performance. Let us lead some good examples. Let the taxpayers witness the extinction of these busy “For Official Use Only (Also?)” vehicles for good. As administrator, I rather would see these vehicles rust in one mound than see them being abused. Let us cut on unnecessary travels, luxury summits and the like activities. The money saved can be used for many good purposes.

7. *Redirect and streamline research thrust*

Oh, Money, Money, and Money! “The greed for thou is the root of all evil!” Research must never create the impression that it is some sort of a business or income-generation activity. Hence, let not the size of funds be the consideration in choosing research problems.

Let us populate UPV with critical thinkers, those who will attend to the problems of our own communities. Let us “Filipinize” all research and extension plans and activities in line with the needs and aspirations of our society. Let us encourage frugal research works and the truly gifted researchers. Let there be strict compliance policies with regards the choice of research problems, support role of the University, and the evaluation of research results. You will be amazed at the savings generated from these policies!

Irrelevant research is harmful than just being useless because they consume funds with little (if any) benefit to the society. In that sense, research qualifies as corruption. Similarly, multinational types of researches are fancy, flashy and they carry lots of money; but they better serve other foreign societies. Further, local journals and other mundane circulation materials will be promoted because they are accessible as affordable. Henceforth, my administration shall place priority on University-wide research reviews that will involve non-partisan sectors (the public!) and an external panel of educators. Research will be defined mainly on grounds of relevance. UPV shall lead the region in identifying well-thought researchable problems, and only then will the University be in a good position to influence societal agenda.
8. Encourage voluntary extension services

Certainly, a University level teaching experience can find significant extension in educating the society. Existing knowledge may be imparted voluntarily to the society through various means. This is genuine extension work. It must not compete with existing activities of cause-oriented groups. If research works are relevant, then they, too, will find direct practical applications.

9. Improve administration

“A public office is a public trust.” My administration will make VERY clear the dividing line between “serbisyo publiko” and “perwesyo publiko.” Personnel shall model levelheadedness and humility. UPV employees shall behave and expect to be treated just like any other government employee. They shall be visible to the community. We shall bear in mind that hundreds to thousands of able professionals are jobless. Let everyone realize how thankful he/she must be for having a job in UPV. In the main, let us all endeavor to make the least fortunate amongst us experience a bit of quality life at least inside our campus.

To all UPV personnel: You will not need to worry anymore. I can assure you that you will all do your respective duties.

10. Improve faculty performance

Faculty activities will be monitored regularly. In particular, under no circumstances will classes be sacrificed for research or extension activities. These activities will be strictly regulated. For instance, students may not be exploited for purposes related to faculty research or extension work, under guise of Special Problem, Special Topics, Seminar, Fieldwork or thesis. To help ensure quality instruction, strict rules on faculty hiring will be implemented. Faculty/academe research shall aim at getting the science right rather than amassing projects, which hardly benefit the Filipino society. UPV will need professionals who are creative, ingenious, and who will set as fine examples as educators or mentors. These are the people who shall deserve more rewards such as promotion.

11. Involve the learners

I am attracted to the idea that University students are/can be made capable of assuming responsibility for their actions. I am equally attracted to the notion that enterprising students might wish to get involved as “watch dogs” of my administration. I will not mind of their presence in certain committees as observers. Neither would I mind them coming to report to me directly.

12. Dream a bit!

a. a Student Center or mall
b. a huge 24/7 communication café to support the libraries
c. a well-equipped sports/recreation gymnasium
d. better housing/living conditions
Conclusion

Could it be that the great thinker, Aristophanes, foretold our problem some 2400 y ago? He did say, “Youth ages, immaturity is outgrown, ignorance can be educated, and drunkenness sobered, but stupid lasts forever.” Yes, there is hope to educate the young, the immature, the ignorant and even the drunk, but never a stupid person. Maybe it is high time to heed Aristophanes. I wonder if UPV could have conquered heights a long time ago if not for our stubborn problems.

You can read my lines: I will not be another leader of a lost cause. On the other hand, the caveats, as you might expect, I alone am not capable of revolutionizing human values. I am not even close to perfect, and I could be the least important being amongst us. The only fortunate thing for me is that I understand fully that I can be a blessing to other people. Now, certainly, I know that you can be, too.

Finally, remember the many good individuals who sacrificed their own welfares to build the foundation of our education. WALK WITH THESE GREAT MEN BEFORE YOU! IF YOU TRULY CAN, I AM ONE WILLING TO LEAD!

God bless you all!