

Continuity and Change under Challenging Times: A Vision for the UP College of Law

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Introduction

The UP College of Law, with its rich history and marked influence, remains a foundational institution of the University of the Philippines System. Deanship of the College is not only a position of prestige and leadership, but also a solemn trust for which any prospective Dean is accountable not only to the Law community, but also the University community and wider public. Anyone who wishes to take up the mantle must not only look toward the College's future possibilities and opportunities, but also bear the burdens and responsibilities of its history and traditions. To be a Dean of the UP College of Law, one must manage and balance, but also sometimes drive and propel, continuity and change.

Having joined the permanent faculty of the College in 2010 after a brief stint at the UP Asian Center and some odd years as senior lecturer since 1993, I have witnessed up close and reflected upon the tangible impacts made by each one of the Deans I have had the privilege to serve under. The introduction of numerous internal reforms capped by the acquisition of ISO9001:2015 certification highlights the efforts of Dean Fides Cordero-Tan to institutionalize key policies and standardize the most important processes and procedures of the UP Law Complex. These built upon the extensive administrative work and management and business savvy of former Dean and now UP President Danilo L. Concepcion were pivotal to the enhancement of the welfare and development of faculty and personnel as well as to generate the resources needed to support those tasks. These in turn leveraged the high and exacting standards of academic scholarship established under former Dean and now Supreme Court Justice Marvic Victor F. Leonen. Each of these three Deans under whom I have served have made indelible contributions to the UP Law Complex and set the highest standards of performance for any Deans that follow.

The formulation of a Vision-Mission-Goals statement, and the identification and implementation of a 10 Point Agenda with Strategic Objectives for the UP Law Complex under the current Dean have set the stage for establishing the UP College of Law and the UP Law Center as institutions that can withstand the winds of change and the tests of time. These encapsulated and documented the underlying currents of not only the present but also all past College administrations and must remain the basis for the future. These serve as the bases for institutional continuity that provide the current starting point for a change in administration.

But continuity is not enough, and change is essential. The UP Law Complex faces major challenges within, arising from the fact that major shifts are taking place from without. For quite some time now, it has been bursting at the seams, literally and figuratively: well within the 21st Century it still carries on with the structure and processes of the century before. The

College and Law Center *plantilla*, for example, is still the same as it was when I was studying law despite the obvious differences in student population, research scope, and administrative support requirements.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated and intensified the need for change, in everything from pedagogy to technology, and added on to already existing social, political, and economic challenges. Taking the reins of leadership of the UP Law Complex at this time is akin to sailing a proud tall ship and navigating a storm of uncertainty arising from major challenges to public health, civil and political rights, national economic progress, regional and global geopolitical shifts. In the past year we have, like the rest of the University, been constrained to adjust and adapt to completely different means and methods of legal education. And slowly we are finding out if we are to keep up with society's demands, we must also adjust and adapt to possibly different means and methods of administration and production of our key products: the country's best lawyers, and the best legal thinking and analysis for the Bar and Bench.

With these in mind, the undersigned offers to the Law and University community the following modest Vision and intended programs.

Vision

To attain the institutional Vision¹ and Mission of the UP Law Complex,² I offer the following statement of a personal vision to guide my priorities and administration:

“The UP Law Complex as the most academically advanced, best technologically equipped, most prominent and dynamic educational and research institution recognized and leading in legal thinking, analysis, and practice, nationally and internationally.”

Flagship Programs

The following comprise the programs I propose to pursue together with the able faculty, students, and staff of the UP Law Complex:

1. Institutional Reinforcement.
 - a. Continue the process of codification, updating, and manual-ization of policies in administration, academic development of students and faculty, personnel development, and legal research.

¹ “The UP College of Law, together with the UP Law Center and allied units, is the country's premier academic and research legal institution committed to the rule of law.”

² “To transform our students into highly ethical, exceptionally competent, and socially mindful lawyers by providing them knowledge, skills and values within a learning-conducive environment distinguished by a forward academic program and a deeply invested faculty, administrators, and staff,” and “to contribute to a deeper understanding of the rule of law through groundbreaking legal scholarship and committed public service.”

- b. Continue to enhance the role of academic clusters and alumni in the development of course benchmarks, content, and materials, as well as the recruitment and development of teaching and research faculty.
- c. Work toward the formal establishment of a mid-level management tier composed of the Office of the Associate Dean for Research and Development, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and Associate Dean for Administration, or their equivalent, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of operations.
- d. Establish a professional career pathway toward the Deanship through structural and policy reforms that allow junior faculty to clearly move up the ranks and acquire skills and competencies for higher management responsibilities, including the Office of the Dean.
- e. Support the promotion and recognition of Law Faculty members as public intellectuals and UP Law Center institutes and researchers as influential national experts or expert-centers through deliberate public engagement programs in traditional and new media, including ubiquitous social media platforms, and public relations management that keeps the profile of the UP Law Complex high in the public consciousness.
- f. Recruit and develop a new generation of publicly-recognized experts in emergent and rapidly evolving legal fields such as cyber, telecommunications, commercial dispute settlement, competition, finance technology, climate-smart energy, international trade and logistics, public health, science-based law enforcement, and the like.
- g. Create and institutionalize an advisory Law Council comprised of former Deans and retired senior faculty to make their wisdom available as guidance for policy- and decision-making as we head into the new normal, post-Covid19 world.

2. Curriculum Modernization

- a. Continue to pursue efforts to modernize the Law curriculum, particularly adjustment of subject sequencing, semestral loading, course syllabi, and offering of new electives to make law studies attuned to the times and give our graduates an added edge in their career endeavors.
- b. Consciously and deliberately review, update, and systematize legal pedagogy through more systematic internal sharing among permanent faculty and lecturers, introductory teaching skills seminars for new incoming faculty, and clear benchmarking of course content and methodologies with the view toward creating new teaching systems relevant to post-pandemic “new normal” conditions.
- c. Re-open elective courses selectively to well-performing students, particularly in cutting-edge fields of law within the expertise of the Faculty, as a means of recruiting and mentoring the next generation of legal experts.
- d. Open up of some JD and LLM courses for graduate studies, especially those suited to inter-disciplinary work (e.g., Legal Theory), including cross-enrolment of graduate students from other programs/disciplines who seek to enhance their research through familiarization with the law.

- e. Recruit more Visiting Foreign Professors from Asia, North America, UK, Europe, and Latin America to participate in the LLM Program and for certain courses in the JD Program.
3. Faculty, Student and Staff Welfare
- a. As a priority matter, focus on addressing the immediate and special needs of students originally scheduled to take the 2020 Bar Examinations and of the present batch of students, both of whom will undergo a totally different (and for some, delayed) Bar Examination in November 2021.
 - b. Promote and offer trainings in career and retirement planning for permanent faculty and staff of the UP Law Complex.
 - c. Promote and offer trainings in practical financial and business management for faculty, staff, and students.
 - d. Establish a staff development program to enable current and future staff to upgrade/enhance their existing individual skills and competencies.
 - e. Expand scholarship and financial support options for students to include select emergencies.
 - f. Open and promote external education opportunities such as short-term fellowships and exchange programs for students and faculty.
 - g. Explore possibilities for other benefits and privileges for faculty, staff, and students.
4. Structural Transformation.
- a. Establish an Office for Technology Administration and Development to manage increasing ICT needs of the UP Law Complex and its constituents and clientele.
 - b. Pursue the modernization of the bureaucracy and administrative processes of the UP Law Complex.
 - c. Work toward the establishment of new Institutes to be responsible for cutting-edge legal research in rapidly evolving fields in economics and trade, information and communications technology, social identity, and good governance.
5. Facilities Upgrades
- a. Pursue the rationalization of space and renovate and expand the infrastructure of the UP Law Complex for purposes of pandemic-proofing and adjustment to post-pandemic design standards.
 - b. Adopt internet-based transaction mechanisms and digital/paperless documentation technologies.
 - c. Continue the digitization of UP Law Library resources, especially historical documents and materials, and expand it to other records and holdings of the Up Law Complex.

6. Institutional Outreach.
 - a. Promote active exchanges and collaborative projects between the UP Law Complex and other faculties and research centers of UP Diliman and other UP campuses, and the UP System offices.
 - b. Support and shepherd the development and enhancement of law schools in the State universities and colleges in the provinces through exchange and assistance programs.
 - c. Continue and reinforce our engagements with the Supreme Court, the Philippine Judicial Academy, the Legal Education Board, and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines.
 - d. Promote closer and more productive interaction with key offices of the Legislature and Executive Branch, as well as leading representatives of the private sector.
 - e. Expand and formalize our international networks and exchanges with law schools and legal experts' groups abroad.

7. College/Campus/System Collaboration in Reforms.
 - a. Work with UPD and UP System toward the reform of procurement policies and review/updating of accounting and auditing procedures to facilitate the adoption of new technologies, particularly paperless and cloud-based transactions, and to modernize administration.
 - b. Increase support for the UPD and UP System initiatives and projects to modernize and enhance university administration, delivery of services, and discharge of functions.
 - c. Promote cross-fertilization of expertise, educational programs, and research initiatives within UPD and with other UP campuses.

These flagship programs do not seek to replace existing programs that have been working very well. Innovations in recent years such as the diversification of the Clinical Legal Education Program into five different clinics, the holding of the annual Paralegal Training Program, the conduct of under-bar mentoring and Mock Bar Examinations, the expansion of faculty participation in many aspects of College's conduct and administration of legal education, among others, have demonstrated success and will be fully supported and refined or enhanced. In fact, the intention is supplement and advance them through flagship programs.

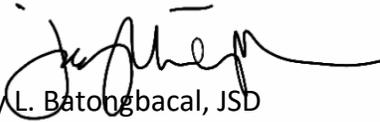
Conclusion

The UP Law Complex is our nest and our home, our workplace and our shelter. My turns in all these years as a Law Professor, an Institute Director, and as Associate Dean have given me much insight and cause for reflection about what is required of those who sit in the Dean's seat. If entrusted with the privilege to serve with the best and brightest of the Philippine legal profession (at present and in the future) and to lead the most storied of all Philippine legal educational institutions, I pledge to discharge the duties and take the responsibilities of office with no less the zeal and dedication as those before me, and ensure that greater heights are

reached by those who come after. No less can be demanded of any person who would stand and offer to be called the Dean of the UP College of Law.

I shall also always keep in mind that embarking on such an endeavor means walking not a lone path that others simply follow, but to walk in the company of an active and vibrant community. My vision and flagship programs can be realized only by working together with our current corps of teachers, students, research and support staff who live our history, embody our traditions of Honor and Excellence, and daily strive to push Law with Courage and for Justice. We are an inseparable part of even greater communities, UP Diliman and the UP System. Together, we all strive to advance our mutual goals of contributing to the true and lasting emancipation of the our people through education.

If these communities permit, I would be honored to serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay L. Batongbacal', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jay L. Batongbacal, JSD
Executive Associate Dean, UP College of Law
09 January 2020