

# **VISION AND PLANS FOR THE U.P. COLLEGE OF LAW**

by

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## ***PRELIMINARY REMARKS***

A mindset of building on the gains of the past years while adjusting to the challenging demands of the present and future is what I commit to bring to the Office of the Dean of the U.P. College of Law.

The immediate challenge is to be able to ride the momentum built by the significant strides the Law Complex community has made in curriculum development, subject matter delivery, as well as stakeholder welfare, while dealing with the new realities that the global COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to confront.

This year, for example, our graduates are poised to take their bar examinations in an unprecedented manner. While I am confident in the ability of our students, faculty, and staff to adjust, we should still undertake the needed preparations carefully and – more importantly in my opinion – with a view towards the future. I believe that the way we deal with the unprecedented challenges posed by the coming bar examinations will set the tone for how learning will be imparted and assessed in law schools in succeeding years.

At the same time, it is recognized that sensitivity and compassion towards the members of our community are central to our collective success in adjusting to the challenges of the times. Any plan of action for the coming years should be constantly looking out for how the members of our community are reacting to and coping with developments. More importantly, the plan itself should be amenable to adjustments based on the community's reaction and still achieve its goals.

The community referred to in the preceding paragraph is not limited to the Law Complex. In keeping with our public service mandate as part of the national university, our priorities should include expanding and diversifying the ways in which we could be of service to the public. Our law school should be at the forefront of public service lawyering not only because these trying times demand it, but also because the experience of our law clinics inform us that there is much to discover, study and possibly transform as our legal institutions and its stakeholders react to the times. Our clinical legal education program is well positioned to lead in this regard, so enabling it to do just that will be a priority.

The readers are requested to appreciate the vision and plans for the U.P. College of Law outlined below in light of these initial remarks. Thank you very much!

### ***Vision for the U.P. Law Complex***

An institution of legal learning and research that, animated by its dedication to public service and the pursuit of academic excellence -

- provides an environment where students acquire knowledge, perspectives and experience that help them become lawyers capable of leading and transforming society in a constantly evolving world;
- prioritizes research on the law and legal policy, elevates the quality of such research through scientific and multidisciplinary approaches, and makes research accessible to its various stakeholders;
- actively pursues the improvement of legal education and collaborates with other stakeholders to achieve this end;
- provides varied life-long learning opportunities in the law;
- works with its stakeholders in creating and maintaining a work environment that promotes personal development, sustainable careers, and institutional adaptability;
- significantly contributes to making the law and legal processes accessible; and
- leads in adherence to relevant standards and in pursuing sustainability.

### ***Flagship Programs***

1. Striving for International Quality Standards – the Driving Force of a Balanced and Inclusive Administration

The ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) standards are lofty but worthwhile goals to strive for because their achievement would bear testament to an academic institution that serves the interests of all stakeholders in a holistic, far-reaching and dynamic fashion. At the academic programme level, for example, the AUN-QA model sets content, process and resource standards for Expected Learning Outcomes,

Programme Structure and Content, Teaching and Learning Approach, Student Assessment, Facilities and Infrastructure, and Outputs and Outcomes. The model also aims to address stakeholder interest by setting standards on Academic Staff and Student Support Services.

Striving to achieve AUN-QA standards will lead to the systematic and sustainable development of the College's academic programs. Moreover, such an effort will lead to the advancement of the competencies and welfare of the College's faculty, staff and students. The emphasis placed by these standards on blended learning and flexibility in teaching methods and course offerings make them very relevant during these times of study and work-from-home arrangements. For the reasons stated above, and because such an effort would build on the gains made during past deanships, gearing the U.P. College of Law and its degree programs towards the AUN-QA standards and preparing them for eventual AUN-QA accreditation would be the primary flagship program in the next three (3) years.

## 2. Expanding Opportunities for Practical Learning and Public Service

What the College has been doing for more than four decades through its law student internship or clinical legal education (CLE) program will gradually become the norm with all law schools now required to institute a CLE program as future law students would be required to complete such a program before taking the bar examinations. While the College's current CLE program already complies with the new requirement, it is recognized that the benefits of CLE have not been maximized.

Pushing the boundaries of our own CLE programs will be a priority so that it could provide more and varied opportunities for learning through experience. Since our law clinics are also one of our College's ways of providing legal aid to different sectors, expanding our CLE program would also create more avenues for public service.

## 3. Forging More, Stronger Linkages

As developments brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have at least demonstrated the viability of remote working arrangements, the next few years should be considered an opportune time for expanding institutional linkages and strengthening existing ones.

Establishing more collaborative ties with domestic institutions will be a focus in the next three years as this would not only fulfill the University's and the Law Center's research and public service mandates, creating more of such working relationships would also lead to institutional learning and capacity building on our part in the same way that our linkages with foreign institutions have reaped for us the same benefits.

#### 4. Developing a Digital Law Learning Commons

The U.P. Law Center has undertaken several projects to disseminate information about and popularize the law to non-lawyers. Social distancing restrictions and experience with our legal aid clinics point to the Internet as the next stage of our campaign to popularize the law. The development of a Digital Law Learning Commons website that educates the public about relevant legal concepts, rules and issues will therefore be prioritized. This resource will be launched with initial content that would then be expanded and updated regularly. The program could then serve as a springboard for a broader and nuanced digital database for legal practitioners and students.

#### 5. Promoting Empirical Studies in the Law

The promotion of empirical research on the law and legal institutions will be a major program. Undertaking such a program would broaden our horizons in terms of legal research and instruction. At the same time, empirical legal studies would instill a multidisciplinary and data or evidence-centered culture in the College. This research thrust is believed to be central to promoting meaningful discussion or evaluation of our legal institutions and governance.

### ***PLAN OF ACTION***

To realize the vision and to implement the programs outlined above, the following measures will be adopted:

- prioritizing resource generation and maximization, primarily by making channels to support the College more accessible
- bolstering and developing our faculty and staff
- rationalizing the administrative workload of faculty members so they could devote more time to teaching and research
- leveraging current distance learning experiences to develop and institutionalize a distance learning option for our academic offerings
- expanding and updating our collection of institutionally published works, and make them digitally accessible
- continuing reforms in the curricula and administration of our degree programs to allow for variety and flexibility in learning and at the same time ensure adequate preparations for the bar examinations

- establishing a permanent office for standardized testing and checking to develop institutional exam delivery and evaluation capabilities, which could then be deployed for bar review courses and, if so requested by the handling faculty member, for student evaluation in other courses
- building on our Quality Management System (QMS) gains by setting higher quality goals where there is room to do so and expanding QMS to other aspects of our work.

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