

WHAT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES HAS DONE TO INSTILL ETHICS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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The University of the Philippines, (UP), as the first state university of the country, has always been conscious of its responsibility to instill ethics and the spirit of public service among its faculty, staff, and students. It is because of this that throughout its life, it has contributed leaders for the nation. Its alumni have taken positions of responsibility not only in politics and administration, but also in such fields as medicine, law, engineering, agriculture, and social welfare, where the practitioners render not only professional expertise, but also caring and understanding of the society's special needs. The social commitment of UP alumni has been expressed in myriad ways, from demonstrations in the streets to lawmaking, from protest songs and community theater to books, novels, and plays that have opened the eyes of many to the problems and challenges of Philippine political and social realities. We have tried to serve as critic and conscience of society, as well as creator and catalyzer of needed policies and programs.

When I took office in 1993, however, the University was being criticized for having lost its soul. A study on its faculty and students, sponsored by the University itself, had found that they tend to put social orientation and mission low in their hierarchy of values, way behind leadership, work ethic, and intellectual capacity. It was opportune then, to enshrine, as the theme of my administration, "UP in the Service of the Nation". I thought it was time for the University to pay greater attention to the ways in which it may directly serve the society with the expertise, time, and sense of stewardship of its faculty, staff, and students.

To further concretize this goal, we launched the Ugnayan ng Pahinungod or Oblation Corps in February 1994, as the first new program of my administration. The Pahinungod program institutionalizes voluntarism in the University, drawing from the experience of outstanding UP individuals and organizations who, on their own initiative, have dedicated their talents and skills in serving communities and organizations throughout our country. After a little over a year, the Ugnayan ng Pahinungod has sent volunteers as far North as Batanes and as far South as Sulu.

Eleven Pahinungods now serve full-time in six communities. Hundreds of physicians and other health professionals have gone on over thirty missions to operate on myomas, cataracts, goiters, and other medical problems in areas without surgeons and facilities. Others have given up their weekends and other leisure time to tutor inner-city public school pupils, serve in centers for abused women and children, provide psycho-social processing for trauma victims, assist in agrarian reform communities, and extend assistance to small farmers and fishers, helping them increase their productivity and convert their products for export, among many other activities where they apply the expertise they have learned in the University.

Among the Pahinungod programs is the inclusion of an experimental service learning option in a few courses in the University. This option provides students a chance to serve during the semester as part of their coursework. This is a two-way exchange, providing communities with volunteers in certain areas of need, and enriching the course with the testing and practical insights on its concepts and theories in the field.

I would like to emphasize that the Ugnayan ng Pahinungod does not stand alone. Rather it joins earlier programs of the University that manifest the UP community's commitment to the nation and the values it lives by. My predecessor, Dr. Jose V. Abueva, launched the Socialized Tuition and Financial Assistance Program (STFAP) to be an experiment in social justice within the University. In helping to build the nation as well as gear it for global competitiveness, he formulated the multilingual language policy, promoting the use of Filipino even as our proficiency in English as the international language is preserved and enhanced. To them we have added another leg, mathematics as the third language, which will further prepare our students and our nation for life in the twenty-first century. Of course our programs in science and technology are also offerings to the nation, since we must develop our capability in these fields in order to be globally productive and competitive. At the same time, our programs in the humanities, the arts, and the social sciences are our contribution not only in better understanding and appreciating the world we live in, but also in being more rooted in and confident of our uniqueness as Filipinos.

As direct service to government, we now have on secondment several faculty members who are occupying positions of leadership in the bureaucracy. We continue to provide consultancy services to national agencies, public enterprises, and local governments. We are undertaking, through the University Center for Integrative and Development Studies and other research units, policy analyses and studies for use of decision makers in formulating laws and programs for the further development and democratization of our nation. We should also not fail to mention that our teaching program aims to provide the Philippines with a continuous supply of young, idealistic graduates who are conscious and proud of their status as *Iskolar ng Bayan*, and who recognize an obligation to serve their country and their people.

In pursuing this vision, we are trying to make UP a more value-centered university, one which is as committed to the molding of character as it is to academic excellence. In both the UP Faculty Conference last May and in the General Alumni Homecoming last June, the faculty and alumni stressed the need to infuse ethics and values more creatively and forcefully into our curricula, particularly in the General Education Program. They also called for the formulation of a code of ethics for faculty which will complement the rules of discipline of students and the vision and mission statements of the different academic units of the University. The emerging emphasis on values will go a long way in helping students recognize that UP is preparing them for a life lived in service, concern, and compassion for their fellow men and women.