

**RAISING UP CEBU**  
**A Vision Paper**  
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This vision paper is entitled *Raising UP Cebu* and one might think this is about lifting UP Cebu to greater heights. Yes, it is, but not right away. This paper is about *raising* UP Cebu, as if UP Cebu is a small child and, in many ways, it is. It might be 104 years old but as a Constituent Unit, it is very much a fledgling. In this paper are my thoughts about how to care for and nurture a “small child” like UP Cebu and help it to grow and thrive to maturity. Thus, this paper may, at times, be about parenting, which, upon reflection, UP Cebu seems to need.

**PUT UP CEBU FIRST**

In the early years of a child’s life, a parent’s life is so disrupted because it seems everything is about the child and what is best for them. UP Cebu needs the same attention. If there is a message, something like a tag line that I would like to be foremost in our minds all the time, it is **PUT UP CEBU FIRST**. To let it grow, develop and mature, it needs supportive and loving parents. The loving part is not a problem. There is no lack of love for UP Cebu. This is why I believe to PUT UP CEBU FIRST will not be a problem for us. We just have to remember it all the time. ***Putting UP Cebu first means we have to keep in mind what is best for UP Cebu in all decisions we have to make, be it something big like proposing a new program, a new office, increasing sections, or something small like procuring supplies. Is it for the best of UP Cebu?*** We have to put UP Cebu first.

**UP CEBU NEEDS TO ESTABLISH ITS IDENTITY AS A CU**

Primary to UP Cebu’s development is establishing a strong identity. Like a small child, UP Cebu needs the requisite support. If we are good parents, we would support our child taking into consideration what they need, not what we want. UP Cebu still needs to establish its identity. And it has to be given the space it needs to do this. We know of many stories of parents dictating their children about what to do, what to study, where to work, who to marry. If these kids were successful, perhaps they were exceptions to the rule. But kids who are thwarted or inhibited will generally find it difficult to bloom. Or worse, find it difficult to be happy. UP Cebu has its own very similar story when it comes to establishing our niche. A niche is supposed to inform our teaching, research, extension and public service. First it was IT. Then it was creative design. Or is it both of them together now? I am not sure anymore. Many of us are confused. This is similar to an identity crisis of an adolescent and this has to be resolved to allow the adolescent to develop into a well-adjusted adult with a clear sense of who they are. Also, it seems these niches were not fully embraced by the collective. This may be understandable as some programs may inadvertently feel excluded from the niche.

Why don't we allow UP Cebu to grow, develop, and mature without imposing limits or restraints? ***The niche may be important, but why don't we allow it to emerge by itself, borne out of the strengths of UP Cebu.*** And then everyone of us in UP Cebu can readily claim, "this is our niche!" and own it. I believe that the Chancellor, in the next three years, should facilitate the formation of UP Cebu's identity. ***To do this, we have to strengthen UP Cebu in light of its mandates of teaching, research, and extension/public service as well as the Sustainable Development Goals UP identified to commit to.***

### **Strengthen UP Cebu's Academic Programs**

***We have to continue to strengthen the academic programs.*** UP Cebu, under Chancellor Liza Corro, has actually made significant strides in terms of improving the faculty profile, increasing the number of Master's degree holders, more importantly, increasing the number of PhDs, and, also allowing more faculty to go on post-doctoral studies.

Significant improvements have also been put into place as regards the resources to support academic excellence. Our classrooms have improved, we have better equipment, and we have better access to journals and other learning resources.

We have to continue and build on these efforts to be the best we can be as teachers. It is only fitting, because we get the best students. And we want to keep these students at their best so that they will do the right thing, like, for instance, vote for the right candidates, hoping they will never forget.

We will have the first batch of graduates under our revised curricula following the K-12 transition. We have to do our assessments and institute revisions if necessary, to keep our curricula up-to-date with the state-of-the-art in our disciplines and responsive to national and global changes.

### **Strengthen the faculty's research and publication and creative work capability**

***Together with our academic programs, we have to strengthen the research and publication and creative work capability of the faculty.*** As the current Director of the Central Visayas Studies Center, I am happy to report that there has really been an improvement in the number of research and creative work projects conducted by the faculty. This resulted to an increase in publications as well, particularly in Scopus and Web of Science Indexed journals. This improvement, however, is not enough, sad to say. ***Really, this is where concerted effort and, with emphasis—funding, have to be focused on.***

Very recently, UP Cebu gained our first UP Scientist, Dr. Gera and our first UP Artist, Dr. Montera. If support can be poured into research and publication and creative work, we would have more Dr. Geras and Dr. Monteras. I believe that is a goal UP Cebu should work on.

Currently, UP Cebu also has two Professor Emeritus awardees, Prof. Felisa Etemadi and Dr. Jess Juario. Again, the goal is to have more faculty of their caliber.

One possibility is to utilize the Academic Program Improvement funds for the creation of research laboratories for interested programs. Faculty members from different programs can even collaborate together and form their research lab. Initially, we can just craft proposals as outputs to be submitted to possible funders or to possible partners from other institutions here or abroad. The goal is for these research labs to get funded, be sustainable and eventually be institutionalized.

### **Provide adequate support for extension and public service**

Supporting the extension and public service efforts of the faculty allow UP Cebu to contribute as well as give back to the community. Continued support has to be given to the Office of Pahinungod and the UP Cebu Extension Office. The Basic Extension Fund has to be increased from its current amount. UP Cebu also benefits from extension and public service activities by making the presence of UP Cebu felt and its reputation enhanced.

### **Provide adequate plantilla items for the faculty, administrative staff and REPS**

It is not only funding that is needed for the strengthening of programs, strengthening of research and creative work capability, and supporting extension and public service. More importantly, plantilla items are badly needed for these goals to be reached.

***Plantilla items will facilitate in providing the faculty the space to do research and extension when there are the right number of faculty to handle the CU's administrative and academic loads.*** These items are needed not only for the faculty but for the administrative staff and REPS as well, whose support is crucial to the enhancement of our academics. For example, the OVCAA, a crucial office for our academic advancement has only 1 staff. The OVCAA will benefit greatly with having a REPS in the office as well.

***Having the adequate number of plantilla items with higher salary grades for the admin staff and REPS is necessary for our operations and will also facilitate their professional growth.*** In the meantime, we should assess how to maximize the REPS Development Fund and the Admin Staff Development Fund to support the advancement of the REPS and admin staff. We should continue efforts to secure more items because UP Cebu cannot grow and expand without them. I understand that this is a perennial problem for all CUs and this would really be one of the toughest challenges for the next Chancellor.

## **Focus on academic assessment and development**

To be honest, a lot of my apprehension about the chancellorship also has to do with the unfinished and pending construction projects as well as the informal settlers. But then, talking to other UP Cebu constituents who readily offer their help when I tell them my misgivings, I realized UP Cebu is first and foremost an academic institution. Academics is front and center. To use a nervous system analogy, academics is the central nervous system, the brain and the spinal cord that when damaged can very well incapacitate an organism. The problems I am apprehensive about, they are peripherals and this is where UP Cebu can use the help, the service, the assistance of its many distinguished alumni. But the chancellor, has to focus on the “central nervous system,” especially now, when we are in our critical formative phase. ***It is ideal to have an academic as UP Cebu’s chancellor. I cannot emphasize enough the focus that should be given to strengthening academic programs as well as research and publication and creative work. But perhaps to drive the point, let us remind ourselves that our academic reputation, our faculty profile, our research and publication profile, these are the scales, the standards that we are measured by.***

My idea is for the specific plans or courses of action to be anchored on this vision that all of us are looking in same direction of strengthening UP Cebu as an academic institution, keeping in mind what is best for UP Cebu. These specific plans and courses of action, though, should not come from the Chancellor alone but have to be planned and negotiated with the different colleges and support offices. ***But I believe that what we should prioritize first is, working on our internal academic assessment.*** We have been working on this separately in the colleges. But we have yet to have a discussion as a unit to have a general picture of what UP Cebu needs to work on as a CU. For example, in the College of Social Sciences where I belong, we know that our weaknesses are our faculty profile and our research and publication profile. We have exerted efforts to address them. During my time as Dean, we as a college made a collective decision and effort to improve our faculty profile. Several of us in the College are finishing our PhDs. We have also utilized a major portion of our Academic Program Improvement Funds to improve our research and publication outputs. One strength of our college is teaching performance and extension. SocSci teachers are consistently excellent teachers. The other colleges may also have their own strengths and weaknesses. But as a unit, we have yet to work on this together. Perhaps, the colleges can help each other balance these strengths and weaknesses. For instance, collaborations with the College of Science, which I believe is stronger in terms of research and publication, or with CCAD and SoM for extension, can be helpful to the other colleges.

***Working on our internal academic assessment will then better prepare the programs for the external Quality Assurance evaluation that the CUs are being encouraged and possibly required to go through.*** In my own assessment, many of our programs are not ready for this. Some programs may be, but the goal is for all the programs to be ready and to ace external evaluations.

If we are successful in our efforts to strengthen our academics and continue doing this for the years to come, we can expect a UP CEBU with a stronger presence and greater impact. Then we can shift our focus to intensifying, for instance, internationalization efforts, expansion of our programs, such as increasing the number of sections, instituting graduate programs or institutionalizing proposed centers. Although we have been doing these to some extent, what I am saying is, to prioritize and focus our efforts on what is the most important instead of doing everything at once.

If we are successful in our efforts, we just might be able to PUT UP CEBU FIRST. Now it takes on a new meaning—UP Cebu as first in the region, then first in the Visayas, and why not, first in the country. First in Asia? As of now it may feel like a far-fetched fantasy. But when I joined UP Cebu 21 years ago, UP Cebu becoming a CU was a far-fetched fantasy.

## **THE ENVIRONMENT OF DEVELOPMENT TO RAISE UP CEBU IN**

As any parent realizes when raising children, it is not only nourishment, lots of love nor exciting stimulation that would make a child strong, independent, well-adjusted. It benefits a child to be in a climate conducive to optimal development. To use the soil-seed analogy, seeds will fail to grow and thrive when the soil is not good. Similarly, no matter how many excellent plans and courses of action we take for UP Cebu, when the climate or atmosphere is not conducive, these efforts may not pan out.

***UP Cebu will grow and thrive when our mindset is more collective rather than individualistic.*** I see this in the way we work as colleges. As I mentioned earlier, separately. Our affairs, their affairs. And it can be that way, especially when a CU is big and mature. But we are still small and developing, and we can exploit this “smallness” to our advantage by working more collectively, to boost each other up.

***UP Cebu will grow and thrive in an atmosphere where our rights and freedoms are respected while keeping in mind that we are also bound by rules and policies of institutions governing*** us such as the UP System, the Civil Service Commission and CHED.

UP Cebu should continue to ***guarantee our academic freedom*** and continue to ***guarantee and safeguard our freedom of expression.***

The ***academic rights of students*** as well as their ***rights to representation*** have to be ***respected and guaranteed.***

Open lines of communication have to be maintained among the different sectors as we balance our rights and freedoms with our organizational and administrative realities.

***UP Cebu will grow and thrive in an atmosphere of inclusivity.*** This is facilitated by open channels of communication among the sectors. Multi-sectoral assemblies (increasing the frequency) will be very helpful for the different sectors, especially the students to put forward their needs and issues. More unit-wide meetings that include the junior faculty should be held to keep them aware of matters in the CU. The junior faculty will be the future of the university and keeping them in the loop will facilitate the continuity of

institutional wisdom. More engagements with the retirees and the alumni will also serve UP Cebu as they can be valuable sources of support.

UP Cebu can also tap the Gender and Development Office to work closely with the students to ensure that gender equality and inclusion are upheld.

***UP Cebu will grow and thrive when governance is democratic and transparent.***

Collegiality in planning and decision-making is valued and expected. While democratic governance is generally practiced in the UP System, this is something we should guarantee and safeguard along with transparency so that there are no doubts and trust is fostered.

***UP Cebu will grow and thrive when administrative operations are efficient.***

UP Cebu has always been running with less staff than required by administrative demands. Just like the need for academic assessments, an organizational assessment would benefit UP Cebu to smooth out issues in the processes for a more efficient and systematic operation. For instance, solutions can be explored such as streamlining administrative processes to make things easier and quicker. Remove unnecessary and redundant procedures but in keeping with the requirements of law and administrative policies. A pressing need for UP Cebu is a full-time Budget Officer. Also, the alignment of the APCR/CUPCR/OPCR/IPCR has to be given attention in conjunction with the PBB indicators for them to be consistent, relevant, and effective measures of performance.

## **MOVING FORWARD ON THE HEELS OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

I can only describe the last two years as life changing. Early on in the pandemic, there were social media posts about thinking of the life we go back to after the pandemic. Should we go back to the way things were or take the harsh lessons and rethink or even restructure our lives?

### ***Minding our health and well-being***

A glaring consequence of the pandemic is the impact on our mental health. Although all of us have been affected, the impact on our students has to be given attention. They (especially the 18–19-year-olds) are at a crucial stage of development, particularly brain development. Their experience of the stress of the pandemic may have long-lasting effects that may be ***mitigated by interventions that UP Cebu can provide such as debriefing, counseling, or developing programs aimed at enhancing the well-being of the students as well as other UP Cebu constituents who might need programs like those.*** The Office of Student Affairs, its head Dr. Macasil and before her, Prof. Yu, the staff and particularly our Guidance Specialists have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to provide support to our students despite the challenges online.

The pandemic has also emphasized the need to be physically healthy. It would be a great contribution to ***explore avenues to promote health***, for example, opening yoga PE classes for those who want to join. Prof. Pacres has actually done this. Some faculty and

REPS started badminton sessions using the tennis court. If we have more spaces for health activities, that would be very good. A sports development center is a pending project of Chancellor Corro and we eagerly await that. Also, we might explore decreasing the processed/junk food options in the canteen and increasing the unprocessed healthier options. I would ban Coca Cola but I would be banned from UP Cebu.

### ***Blended learning***

As we move towards going back to the classroom, programs can also be put together to help the students transition from the set-up of the last two years to a limited face-to-face setup and then to the old usual setup. And this brings me to another idea. Personally, I would prefer a blended learning setup not only as a transition phase but as a possible permanent option to faculty and students. ***A blended learning setup may facilitate more independent learning for the students, which would greatly benefit them for lifelong learning.*** This does not preclude having the old normal as the setup in the long run but having the blended learning option may be to our benefit. In which case, we would need the equipment and resources to make this feasible.

### ***Integration of WFH in the Work Setup?***

The past two years has shown us that there is work that can be done at home that ***perhaps, the work-from-home arrangement can be incorporated in the usual work setup.*** Maybe the staff and REPS can continue to work from home even for 1 day? I pose this as a question because there are Civil Service and UP policies we have to contend with as well as if this is something the staff and REPS would prefer. For me, this can facilitate better work-life balance provided rules are in place about respecting the work hours. I actually brought this up during a union assembly with Dr. Gene Nisperos and I am hoping that this is something we can advance, provided this is what the collective prefers.

The common thread in the blended learning setup and the WFH integration is my desire not to go back to the old normal where much of life is spent at work. The pandemic has reminded us about the more important things in life and time with family is paramount. If we think about it, we spend majority of the best years of our life at work. Is this what we really want? Ever since, I have not really been a subscriber of “quality time” where parents spend a small amount but “quality” time with their kids. I subscribe more to quantity of time, that even if we are not doing anything “quality” or anything at all, a lot of time spent together is what matters.

### ***Medical concerns***

The idea that we spend the best years of our life in UP brings me to the subject of medical concerns. The UP System currently has an enhanced hospitalization program (e-HOPE) for the faculty, admin staff, and REPS, but in UP Cebu, we can only use it when we are admitted to a hospital. ***We would like to be able to use it to prevent being admitted so***

***it would be advantageous for us to explore ways to use it for outpatient purposes. Expanding our Health Services Unit is also something we should work for and this will also benefit the students.*** It seems our modern world is not facilitative of health and many young people, as young as our students already have health issues previously common only in middle age or old age. The goal is to expand our HSU, possibly working to have our own Infirmary in the future. All of us would like to feel that we are taken care of while we give our best years of our life to UP.

### ***Retirement preparation***

And what about life after UP? Many retirees spent 30-40 years of their lives in UP. My dissertation, which I hope to defend soon, is about flourishing in old age. A finding that came up is about the possible impact of retirement on well-being. That those who experienced retirement but lacked preparation, both financially and psychologically, may have lower levels of well-being. Imagine working for 40 years and the day after your 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, your life suddenly has no structure. Because we give the best years of our life to UP, perhaps UP can help us to prepare for our life when we leave its halls. ***Programs that educate and even assist about financial investments may be helpful as well as programs that educate on possible after-retirement “careers” or activities that will keep retirees active and productive.*** This is something I am excited to explore.

### **IT TAKES A VILLAGE**

To return to my parenting analogy, a famous African proverb perfectly captures child-rearing: *it takes a village to raise a child*. To ensure the optimal development of UP Cebu, it would take the entire UP community—faculty, students, staff, REPS, alumni, supporters—to work together, make plans, make specific courses of action and carry them out keeping in mind what is best for UP Cebu and PUTTING UP CEBU FIRST.

What I have provided is my general idea about the priority, focus, and direction to take as well as my aspirations for UP Cebu. I believe a crucial role for the Chancellor is to keep this village united and looking in the same direction. We can get together in multi-sectoral assemblies as well as ***hold meetings with specific sectors and committees to thresh out the issues each sector deems important to address and the specifics of what each sector needs*** as well as what each sector has to do to raise UP Cebu, facilitating its maturity into an academic institution with a strong identity, with or without a niche.