



UP SYSTEM PUBLIC SERVICE REPORT

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



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The University of the Philippines continues to engage in responsive and innovative programs and initiatives in battling the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the generation of scientific research that paves the way for a more extensive understanding of the impact of the pandemic and how we could adapt and mitigate future disasters, dissemination of interdisciplinary information through remote and virtual modalities, and provision of solutions for the remote learning needs of students and faculty, and alternative work arrangements of the staff.

Expanding Access to COVID-19 Testing

The Philippine Genome Center (UP System), in addition to its mandated testing through RT-PCR for patients covered by PhilHealth, has launched its drive-thru and on-foot swabbing operations in UP Diliman to accommodate persons who wish to undergo elective swabbing and those who require the test for clearance purposes. In the south, the partnership of UP Mindanao (UPMin), the provincial government, and a construction company saw to the successful opening of the COVID-19 testing facility in Davao del Norte which will increase testing capability in the region.



1 Philippine Genome Center's Drive-thru and On-foot COVID-19 Swabbing Center

Innovative Research in the time of COVID-19

UP experts persevere in conducting research geared towards mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic and preparing us for a better 'new normal.' UP Diliman (UPD) faculty members, who are part of the OCTA Research Team, have made various policy recommendations for the IATF based on their analyses and projections of COVID-19 data. UP Los Baños (UPLB) researchers are exploring the potential of indigenous plants in the treatment of COVID-19 and have developed a natural root growth booster that can speed up germination and flowering of high-value crops. They are also doing virus research on bats to help avoid the emergence of a similar pandemic. UP Manila (UPM) presented its public health study of motorcycle taxis and recommended their resumption of operations as the mode of transportation will contribute to the new norm mobility. UP System, through the Center for Integrative Development Studies (CIDS), disseminated policy briefs that cover policy areas affected by the pandemic. Meanwhile, UPV, through the Philippine Genome Center Visayas, and the Romblon State University inked a Memorandum of Academic and Research Cooperation to pursue genomic research opportunities and training collaborations.



2 UPLB develops a natural root growth booster



1 PGC Visayas and Romblon State University pursue research collaborations

Wide-reaching and Informational Webinars, Conferences, and Online Services and Trainings

Migrating face-to-face activities such as lectures and conferences to online platforms allowed UP to reach audiences from different sectors, who then benefit from the array of topics that are being delivered by UP experts. The UP System, through the CIDS, discussed our prospects for regional security and integration as well as our strategic interests in the 5th Katipunan Conference. UPM led the Virtual Conference on Medical Education in the Pandemic: COVID-19 and Residency Training, as part of the Stop COVID Deaths series, in addition to online fora that presented long-term effects of CoViD-19 on health and the economy (ULAT Episode 2) and vaccine development updates (PGH Grand Rounds). UPM also partnered with the British Embassy Manila in organizing a public health webinar series for our frontline workers. On the other hand, the UP Alumni Association tackled the impact of COVID-19 on education in the UPAA e-Kapihan ng Bayan sa UP.

Various units across the UP System organized webinars that had been livestreamed in Facebook and Youtube. UPLB, UP Baguio (UPB), UP Open University (UPOU), UPD, and UPM have all presented valuable insights in webinars that touched on environmental resource protection and management, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, wildlife protection, mobility, housing, and food economy and security. Moreover, UPD had been very active in sharing their expertise as they emphasized that a holistic and intersectional understanding of the environmental problem in Manila Bay is crucial in implementing government rehabilitation projects. UP Visayas contextualized the pandemic's challenges and the approaches that the province must employ as a coastal city in response to the pandemic.

Marginalized communities have also been affected by the pandemic. UPB organized webinars that discussed the experiences of indigenous peoples, while UPOU and UPM discussed ways to care for the elderly and support their health and wellbeing.

Through the FICS Chat, a community service program of the UPOU, learners are provided pertinent knowledge and skills that will help them write theses and dissertations.

To promote mental health and overall wellbeing, UPLB launched the UNPLUGGED webinar series that featured the therapeutic benefits of activities such as balance and meditation, art, journaling, and planting, and a webinar entitled Mental Struggle is Real: It's Okay Not To Be Okay. The Mentalakayan Serye of UPB shed light on the misconceptions related to the physical traits of people suffering from mental health illness; its Pagyabong webinar series that endeavored to provide ways in promoting wellbeing in the workplace and Ugnayan ng Pahinungod's psychosocial response program entitled Ebiyag are in line with its commitment as well. UPV and UPOU organized a mental health forum to discuss how the public, especially the youth and women, can cope with anxiety brought by the pandemic and welcome the new normal with a healthy state of mind. On the other hand, UPD organized the Bahaginan as a venue for people to bond over common topics of interest and another webinar that taught participants to acknowledge, befriend, and manage emotions. It also provided free psychotherapy sessions for students. UPM and UPMIn also organized their own webinars that catered to the mental health and psychosocial needs of their constituents.

Aside from academic units, student organizations have also organized informative webinars that draw from their disciplines. UPM's Bone Appétit 2020: Pandemya ala Ensayo was held to inform and raise students' awareness on musculoskeletal health towards better health-promoting and health-seeking behaviors that promote health and wellness.

The pandemic may have limited our physical interactions, but it has presented an opportunity for UP's stakeholders to enhance their participation in the quality trainings and public service programs that the University provides. The UP System, through the UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies, trained employees of the Commission on Human Rights on Gender Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disasters. UPLB, in celebration of the 31st National Statistics Month, offered free statistical consulting services for its constituents. Moreover, university researchers of UPLB showed webinar participants the conduct of vertical gardening and snap hydroponics. It has organized a Training of Trainers' Program on Horticultural Chain Management, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and partnered with the Isabela State University in conducting a short online course on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA). In the same vein, UPB's Online Museum Management Training aimed to hone the skills of museum

and art curators in the SUCs. On the other hand, UPD organized a Training on Management of Hazardous Substances and Wastes to personnel, as a refresher on environmental regulations and responsible waste disposal.

Support for Remote Learning Needs

UP, in its commitment to ensure that the remote learning needs of each student will be met, knocked on the kind and generous hearts of alumni to help its campaign. It was met with overwhelming response, as manifested by the donations of alumni from UPV, UPLB, and UP Cebu (UPC). High school and college students have been given desktop and laptop computers with internet connectivity.



3 UP Cebu alumni support the remote learning of students by donating gadgets

The University also committed to provide all forms of assistance as students embarked on their first semester under the remote learning modality. UPV launched the fourfold Virtual and Remote Assistance in Learning Program that guided teachers and learners alike in using computers and online resources and accessing online peer tutorial programs. UPOU held trainings for ODeL to support learners and spur content development. Likewise, UPB conducted its assessment of the remote learning experience of teachers and students, while its library launched its Ask-a-Librarian service to bring academic sources closer to learners. UPD also released its Suspension Guidelines for Storm Signals during remote learning. At the System-level, plans for the UPCAT were discussed carefully, taking into consideration the vast number of issues that need to be addressed to conduct the test safely.

Provision of Online Multimedia Resources

Various units of the University continue to publish information, education, and communication (IEC) materials to inform the public about COVID-19 guidelines and other relevant information. UPMIn, through the Media Production Unit of the BA Communication and Media Arts program, released FAQs about COVID-19. UPD, through the UPD PsycServ, shared guidelines for teachers as they conduct online classes, and tips for students as they continue to study at home. UPOU has also published IEC materials about mental health and online resources about various topics in its website. On the other hand, UPM organized a one-week campaign called Access-E-bility to inform university students about online accessibility for persons with visual impairments. TVUP's Pag-aalay webXHIBITION and Festival featured short videos on everyday heroism and hope in the days of face masks and social distancing.