

Good morning to all our resource speakers, participants and organizers.

2020 was an unprecedented year for the academic community due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2nd semester of the academic year 2019-2020 was abruptly cut short and emergency remote teaching and learning were conducted.

At the onset of the pandemic, UP Diliman, through its Covid-19 Task Force, led in fulfilling UP's public service mandate by setting up a city vaccination program, isolation facilities and testing laboratories, and by helping conduct public health contact tracing through the University Health Service's Public Health Unit.

UP also made sure that education and research continue while ensuring that no one is left behind. UP is guided by three operational principles in responding to the pandemic: first is to protect the community from the pandemic; second is to sustain continuity of instruction and learning; and third is to consider equity concerns.

With these guiding principles in mind, the University provided us with a roadmap that consists of six pillars to prepare us for remote teaching and learning. We have the:

- 1) academic infrastructure such as the learning management system, library databases and library management system;
- 2) physical infrastructure through the provision of gadgets, gadget subsidies, internet connectivity, and internet subsidies to some of our students, faculty and staff;
- 3) the remote learning preparations from course packs and webinars on how to handle classes, to virtual international engagements and partnerships, orientations and teaching effectiveness courses in a remote learning context;
- 4) other support programs for students, faculty and staff were also made available like the remote and interactive learning conversations, remote learning guide infographics, VCconsult, and the deployment of online processes such as BULSA, PUSO and UTAK;
- 5) support for teaching and research technologies and innovations amidst the pandemic by continuing to give its faculty the support for teaching and research through its professorial chairs, faculty grants, Artist Productivity System, Science Productivity System, research grants, and research and extension load credits to enable the faculty to conduct research with reduced teaching load; and
- 6) student support through the Student Learning Assistance System, among others.

UP has been doing it iteratively, minimizing drastic changes, while also allowing for flexibility as it adapts to developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although we can assume that this pandemic has prepared all of us for the next normal, we cannot be complacent as new challenges and crisis conditions might arise that will make it difficult to immediately return to the way things were pre-pandemic.

We need to future-proof our students and prepare them for an uncertain world, while continuously assuring quality of academic programs and services, with both faculty and students engaging in international mobility programs.

But how do we face the next normal? Ito po ang ating aabangan mula sa ating mga tagapagsalita ngayong umaga.

We are honored to have a perfect blend of resource speakers for today's webinar on doing blended learning for General Education courses. Professor Portia Padilla has been actively helping the University with regard to academic matters through the UP System Committee on Remote Teaching and Learning. Dr. Myrissa Alip has been at the forefront of UP Diliman's COVID Task Force, the Ad Hoc Committee on Limited Face-to-Face Class Activities and the Crisis Management Technical Team. These committees are instrumental in getting CHED, DOH and the QC LGU's approval of our limited face-to-face class activities this semester.

Thank you very much, Prof. Portia and Doc My, for saying yes to this webinar. Mabuhay po kayo! And of course, let me also thank the General Education Center of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for organizing this activity, especially the GEC Director Prof. Nancy Kimuell-Gabriel and all the GEC staff.

Muli, maraming salamat, magandang umaga at makabuluhang pakikinig sa lahat!