

AAIG 2021 SUMMIT WEBINAR 1 TRANSCRIPT – COMMISSIONER ALDRIN DARILAG

Thank you, my congratulations to the University of Santo Tomas Alumni Association Incorporated for organizing this significant academic discourse entitled National Multisectoral Summit for Educational Transformation: an Academe, Alumni, Industry, and Government Collaboration. To the men and women of the (UST) Alumni Association Incorporated, my felicitations for this initiative and trail blazing effort of consolidating the parameters of the academe, alumni, industry, and government to lay down on the discussion table all the necessary initiatives and interventions for a more sustainable growth and development in the education sector. It has been 538 days since the Philippines had a lockdown in response to Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, the country has reported around almost 2 million cases and almost 34,000 deaths. While we remain hopeful that Covid-19 will be eradicated soon, noting that almost 1.8 million cases have recovered from the virus, it is certain that Covid-19 has disrupted and changed the landscape of the higher education. Quoting Professor Fernando Reimers' statement in the Global Education Innovation Initiatives of Harvard University for educators, Covid-19 pandemic is a quintessential adaptive and transformative challenge, one for which there is no pre-configured playbook that can guide appropriate responses. Education leaders must swiftly design responses and with specific context in mind as the pandemic runs its course. This call for educators to urgently adapt to the needs of our times and respond to multiple adaptive and transformative challenges necessary for the revitalization of the vital roles of government, academe and industry to actively involve in the discussion and co-create systemic and long-term solutions. The multisectoral group should unite to work better during this time of crisis. Covid-19 continues to have a profound impact on the economic, political and cultural landscapes of societies around the globe. Since Covid has prevented mobility, millions of Filipinos have lost their jobs, sacrificing their daily source of income, endangering the possibility of enrolling their children resulting to a significant decline in student enrolment, increased reports on school closures and an unexpected faculty retrenchment. According to the UNESCO, Covid-19 Educational Disruption and Response Task Force, through its global monitoring report, almost 1.2 billion young learners have been affected by school closures around the world. As to the particular statistics of our country during the pandemic, the report records that more than 28 million Filipino learners have been affected with more than 3.5 million of those belonging to the higher education sector. To somehow mitigate the effect of Covid-19 to education and for learning continuity of children, countries around the world have been implementing remote education schemes. Yet majority of the world's children, particularly those belonging to the poorer households, do not have the sufficient capabilities like internet access, connectivity, personal computers, television and radio at home, amplifying at a great extent the effects of the so-called learning inequalities. Students who lack access to the technologies resorted to home-based learning as their last option to continue their education. As a consequence

many face the risk of never returning to school, undoing years of progress made in education around the world.

For better appreciation of everyone, let me present the following scenarios, as per the data presented by UNICEF 2020. While more than 90 of the countries adopted digital and or broadcast remote learning policies, only 60 percent did so for pre-primary education. Policy measures taken by the governments to ensure learning continuity through broadcast or digital media allowed for potentially reaching 69% of school children at maximum in pre-primary to secondary education globally; 31% of school children worldwide or 463 million cannot be reached by the broadcast and internet-based remote learning policies either due to the lack of necessary technological assets at home or because they were not targeted by the adopted policies. Online platforms were the most used means by the government to deliver education while schools remain closed with 83 percent of countries using this method. However, this allowed for potentially reaching only about a quarter of school children worldwide. Television had the potential to reach the most students, 62% globally, only 16% of school children could be reached by radio based learning worldwide. Globally, three out of four students who cannot be reached by the remote learning policies come from rural areas and or belong to the poorest households. Both public and private higher education institutions had to adjust to the new situation where face-to-face interaction and mass gatherings are prohibited. Committed to their mandate, universities and colleges in the Philippines devised innovative ways to fulfill their tri-focal functions of instruction, research and community extension. Everyone adjusted to work from home arrangements, from the operations and support service units to the administrators and teachers. From the confines of their homes, distant from their students and physical resources available in schools, teachers and administrators were put to the task of revising and adapting course syllabi and requirements as they shifted to flexible learning modalities. Learning management systems were used by students and teachers who have access to electronic devices and reliable internet connections, while students who have limited access to computers or internet have relied on smart phones to exchange messages notes and materials through text messaging email and social media. To be specific, according to the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and the Philippines Statistical Research and Training Institute, in their 2019 National ICT Household survey, only about 18 percent of households have nationwide access to a stable internet connection, leaving 82 percent disconnected. The survey also revealed that there were more households who can have access to radio and television rather than wi-fi connected laptops. Indeed it is true connectivity where people can attribute their level of accessibility to information and education in this time of health crisis. Amidst today's global context and ongoing battles against Covid-19, the world we live has truly changed.

To provide all of you a glimpse of the scenario let me share a brief update on the three crucial Es: education, employment and economy. In a study of Pokrel and Chhetri in the year 2021, this Covid-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of the education system in human history affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Broadly identified challenges as the world transitions into alternative modes of teaching and learning includes issues on accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, lifelong learning and education policy. In terms of the prospects of the world economy, the UN Department of Education and Social Affairs through its World Economic Situation and Prospects mid-2020 report states that internationally, a 3.2% contraction is projected to hit the market. This would mean that 8.5 trillion dollars will be lost as output over the next two years, pushing 34 million people into extreme poverty. And with the last E, which is employment, the latest Covid-19 monitoring report of the International Labor Organization indicates that 94% of jobs equivalent to 2.7 billion workers are affected by lockdown measures, with 25 million of those are currently under the threat of unemployment. Furthermore, the report highlighted that young workers are the major victims of socio-economic consequences of this pandemic, as they are disproportionately impacted by multiple and simultaneous shocks, such as loss of jobs, disruption of training and education, and lack of new employment opportunities. Given these situations, the Commission has embarked on a series of proactive response measures that shall ensure that higher education learning continuity is realized amidst the time of pandemic. The Commission are constantly working with significant stakeholders to ensure that one's socio-economic background should not be a deterrent factor to prevent students for an equitable quality education. To share quick wins about what we do in the Commission, in line with this equitable education, we support our higher education campuses through the provision of a 3 billion peso budget to help them transform to smart campus in partnership with the DICT. CHED is determined to provide scholarship grants to children of overseas Filipino workers in partnership with DOLE, and lastly, our consistency in providing free higher education through the universal access to quality tertiary education in upholding RA 10931. However, while we sustain the gains we have achieved recently, some universities had to suspend remote or online classes caused by severe natural calamities. For instance, due to super typhoon Rolly, some public universities have temporarily suspended all forms of academic classes, secondary to the major catastrophic blow of the super typhoon to the telecommunications lines in Region 5 and the devastation of homes of both faculty and students. It is inspiring to note that part of the rebuilding of the lives and opportunities in Region 5, after the catastrophic effects of super typhoon Rolly, also involved government, academe, industry partnerships. As an example, the Bicol Foundation for Higher Education collaborated with Camarines North State College towards the launching of the operation Bangon Bikolandia in order to pull funds towards the resuscitation of the vehicle region. Other initiatives include Project Sympathy of Catanduanes State University wherein the university pooled funds for the provision of galvanized iron sheets that were used as

roofing of destructed houses in the region. The Pitmaster Foundation worked with Congressman Joey Salceda and Bicol University for the provision of 10,000 relief packs containing essential commodities and 195 sacks of rice benefiting the affected families of the typhoon. Undeniably through the indefatigable spirit of voluntarism of various public and private agencies, our higher education institutions continue to become conduits of social transformation.

As part of the Commission on Higher Education's continued response to these challenges is the strengthening of partnerships with government, academy and industry which led to the following initiatives. First is the launching of PHL CHED Connect. The Commission launched PHL CHED Connect as a free online and comprehensive knowledge resource platform that maintains higher education learning materials in techs. media and other digital assets. These online materials are useful for teaching, learning and resource purposes and are universally accessed by both teachers and learners. As of the latest data, more than 1,609 content materials have been uploaded, engaging more than 60,412 unique users.

Second is the Nationwide Caravan for CHED HiEd Bayanihan. The commission launched the CHED HiEd Bayanihan to address the lack of familiarity and training of our faculty members to flexible learning modes. There were holistic and free teacher training and development programs through our collaboration with public and private HEIs, IT and other business firms. The program offered value seminars and workshops that cover the following topics: virtual classroom management, presentation making, facilitating learning, open and distance education, learning management systems, module design and development, various teaching strategies and methods, learning assessment, and the use of emerging technologies.

Third, making campuses of State Universities and Colleges (SUC) "SMART". Pursuant to Section 10 of Republic Act number 11494, also known as *The Bayanihan To Recover As One Act*, Congress has allocated a significant amount of funding to cover investments for ICT infrastructure, acquisition of learning management systems and other appropriate equipment to fully implement flexible learning modalities for more than 100 public institutions of higher learning. During the virtual press conference of the CHED chair held last June 23, 89 SUCs received a total of Php1,958,432,005.78 to jump start the groundwork for SMART campus universities and colleges to emerge in the country, wherein we have state universities and colleges as the major recipients.

Number four is the Rationalization of the CHED-SIKAP Grant. To ensure global competitiveness of artificial education graduates and provide concrete assistance to teaching personnel for the advancement of research and development, the Commission has released shared Memorandum Order number 6 series of 2020 regarding the guidelines for the Scholarships for Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program or SIKAP Grant. This

unique grant provides opportunities for higher education institutions' teaching personnel or former HEI teaching personnel who wish to persevere in the academe, acquire their advanced degrees, and to serve the country. During this past few Joint CEB and mancom meetings of CHED, and in view of the growing demand for more faculty members to be capacitated under the new normal, the Commission has approved a set of amendments that would allow the SIKAP Grant to be more accessible and responsive to our faculty members by instituting much needed reforms. Such as but not limited to: first is the streamlining the admission process to our regional offices to ensure the slots are given to truly deserving recipients at a timely and judicious manner; second, increasing the probability of completion of programs by ensuring that our scholars study on full-time basis only and to further augment such expectation; increasing the amount of privileges higher than prevailing rates to secure a stable supply of applicants and stimulate superior academic performance from the scholars; the fifth one is the flexible delivery of student affairs and services.

Another commendable initiative of the Commission in this time of Covid-19 pandemic is the implementation of the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) number 8 series of 2021, entitled Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Delivery of Student Affairs and Services or SAS programs during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this measure, the Commission aims to pursue and retrofit the delivery of student affairs and services program during the pandemic through the partner HEIs, focus on catering to mental health of students to various modes or options most appropriate to them. The guidelines shall adequately communicate the needs of our stakeholders and provide strategies for the effective delivery of flexible student affairs and services programs in all HEIs. This policy is also an affirmation that CHED is adamant in prioritizing the mental health and welfare of students and faculty members on top of the pressing concerns of Philippine higher education institutions.

Next is the partnership with state universities and colleges and the local government units. Almost 28 universities have been temporarily used as quarantined facilities benefiting more than 17,000 patients in their respective immediate localities. State universities and colleges have also partnered with other agencies such as small time independent makers and developers to make face masks and disinfectants for distribution to students and faculty. To date, almost 93 million pesos have been allocated to 59 HEIs for the said initiative.

Next is the reconstitution of the technical partner for all discipline. The primary objectives of this initiative are the following: first is to develop a roadmap for the academic discipline programs responsive to the demands of the 21st century and the fourth industrial revolution; second is to promote outcomes based education anchored on the competitiveness and employability of the Filipino graduates; third is to ensure

accountability, transparency and participation in policy making and program, institutional monitoring and evaluation; and last objective of this reconstitution of the technical panel is to institutionalize the representation of essential experts from the government, industry, academe for the various disciplines, policy and standard recommendations.

We have also the Centers of Excellence (COE) and Centers of Development (COD) program wherein the Commission recognizes, that due to overwhelming simultaneous and rapid developments involving the various academic disciplines in their context, challenges and innovations both locally and abroad, existing policies and guidelines have become swiftly dated. Hence, CHED is doing its utmost best to revise the general criteria on identifying potential COEs and CODs across all programs as we align these new parameters to both current and future demands of our learners amidst an increasingly globalized world. This will also cover the important participation of the industry and government in the implementation of the COE and COD mandates relative to the institution's leadership in the community.

Next initiative is our continuation to refine policies processes and programs to adopt the new normal in higher education. The Commission has also introduced relevant guidelines policies, projects, initiatives and programs with the intent to effectively streamline international initiatives in higher education through the laudable pursuits of the Philippine government and its commitment to bilateral, multilateral, regional and international agreements. Some of the noteworthy initiatives of the Commission on internationalization are as follows. So we have the CHED Memorandum Order number 55 series of 2016 or the Policy Framework and Strategies in the Internationalization of the Philippine Higher Education. This proactive endeavor of the Commission aims to articulate the Philippine Higher Education Internationalization Policy to provide a national perspective and context for various initiatives related to the subject of internationalization. We have also CHED Memorandum Order number 62 series of 2016 for the Policy Standards and Guidelines for Transnational Education Programs. The Commission envisions to internationalize Philippine higher education to facilitate the development of human resource responsive to the needs of the times. And we have CHED Memorandum Order number 22 series of 2013 for the Revised Policy Standards and Guidelines on Student Internship Abroad Program. This comprehensive framework of the Commission on student exchange programs served as a catalyst in providing tertiary students the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes in recognized foreign host establishment or organizations in countries abroad. For this year 2021, there has been substantial progress reached in making limited face-to-face classes a possibility which includes in-person internships. Although flexible learning is still deemed the safest modality of learning under the current situation, the Commission recognizes that face-to-face delivery is necessary for courses where tactile, experiential or hands-on learning is most crucial.

Therefore, upon securing the approval from Malacanang, the Commission on Higher Education and the Department of Health, released the Joint Memorandum Circular number 2021-001 or the Guidelines on the Gradual Reopening of Campuses of higher education institutions for limited face-to-face classes during Covid-19 pandemic. Recognizing the vital need of providing additional manpower to support the Philippine healthcare system during this pandemic, six medical and allied health science degree programs, namely, nursing medical technology, physical therapy, medicine, midwifery, and public health, have been identified as priority programs permitted to conduct limited face-to-face classes. Two allied health programs have been added in the recent months, namely, dentistry and radiologic technology.

As of June 2021, 93 colleges and universities across the country are currently authorized to proceed with limited face-to-face classes and internship as duly certified by the respected CHED regional offices. These higher education institutions in the country have passed the health standards and stringent retrofitting imposed by the local and national government authorities to ensure a safe and conducive space for learning of our students. These institutions have been allowed to conduct limited face-to-face classes for the purposes of enabling students to achieve key learning outcomes on specialized laboratory courses and hospital-based clinical clerkship, internship practicum and providing additional manpower to the country's health care system.

During the High Level Cultural Forum on ASEAN held last May, I manifested to the panel of experts the following recommendations in the regional policy framework, which seeks to promote greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agenda among the people of ASEAN. And this includes the following: adoption of culture-based education and the implementation of culture-based management and governance programs for local executives, diplomats and foreign affairs stakeholders; strengthening of the education tourism projects and initiatives of the member states through a framework of sustainable development goals; revitalization and continuation of flexible learning modalities and schemes during and even after Covid-19 pandemic; cross-sectoral and cross-filler collaboration between ASEAN economic community and ASEAN social cultural community through ASEAN education ministers meeting in implementing knowledge based economy projects and initiatives; and the cross-border academic programs that will allow seamless delivery of internationalized and contextualized academic training and formation.

Cognizant of the HEIs education research and service functions, higher education institutions in the Philippines certainly have their agenda full in terms of collaborating and working with government agencies, other academic institutions and the industry sector. We are definite that our colleges and universities are working constantly to address the adverse impacts of Covid-19 to the social, economic, political and environmental facets of our society. As we recognize that much have been won in the fight against Covid-19, our

higher education institutions must proceed to adapting to the now normal by focusing on future needs.

As CHED reported during the Senate budget hearing deliberations, stated below are some areas for possible collaborations with our higher education institutions. First is the provision of continuing capacity building for faculty members particularly on specialized and content heavy courses. Second, resolving connectivity issues in higher education institutions and addressing issues on software, hardware and people-ware and on the advancement of smart campuses. Third, enhancement of mental health and support services to students and faculty members. Fourth, strengthening the quality of our teachers through responsive and innovative pre-service teacher education programs. And fifth, provision of support to research programs and initiatives related to futures-thinking and the constant pursuance of the sustainable development goals.

On my part, with futures-thinking as one of my focal advocacies in the Commission, expect my responsibility of being the torch bearer of this young and growing academic field. I shall fulfill this by strengthening the discourse on futures-thinking in the deliberation and development of new and comprehensive national higher education research agenda of the Philippines. This shall be accomplished through substantial consultations and other possible joint ventures such as the establishment and my spearheading of the futures-thinking consortium amongst various state universities and colleges in Region 5. If I may just share, I have spearheaded the futures-thinking consortium in higher education in Regions 5, 8 and 11. The objectives of this consortium where, first, is to democratize access and utilization of concepts tools and frameworks involved in the futures-thinking and strategic foresight among HEIs; second is to establish an inclusive indigenized and responsive frameworks on futures-thinking in the context of higher education development within the region; third is to operationalize the regional framework and futures-thinking through various programs and activities related to instruction research and community extension; fourth is to develop a regional roadmap on the future of higher education in the region through futures-thinking and strategic foresight indicating the short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives and target outcomes; and fifth to foster and cultivate linkages and partnerships with local, regional and international institutions and stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. The establishment of the futures-thinking consortium was supplemented with other initiatives of the Commission, such as the establishment of the technical working group for SMART campus implementation in all the state universities and colleges; second is the creation of practical working group with DepEd, TESDA and PCW to intensify gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity in the particular offerings of basic education, technical and vocational education and the higher education institutions; third is the project called *From Transition to Transformation: Building the New Landscape of Continuity and Connectivism in the Philippine Higher*

Education. Its key strategic imperative is to move Philippine higher education from the stage of transition due to the Covid-19 pandemic towards the stage of transformation, focused on the new normal, with emphasis on contextualizing, analyzing and operationalizing new dimensions of continuity and connectivism between and among the Commission, the greater higher education sector and the stakeholders. During the meeting of the TWG, the members came up with two key result areas or KRAs as its undertakings. First is to have a clear change context which means that there is a need to articulate the specific types, areas, drivers and forms of change that Philippine higher education ecosystem will need to be mindful of, given the impact of Covid-19 and how it will be shaped the new normal. Second one is to have the agile responses towards transformation; this could be attained through a package of short-term, mid-term and long-term responses that will analyse the transformation of Philippine higher education in the new normal. With these KRAs in mind, this TWG shall be able to recommend new paradigm, parameters and purpose for higher education's transformation to a new landscape of continuity and connectivism. As our nation progresses in this battle against the pandemic, extra extraordinary collaborations between all stakeholders need to be instituted through partnerships and collaborations stakeholders from all sectors of the society united towards the improvement of education with our learners at the core of our collective societal transformation. Our universities and colleges will continue to serve their mandates to advance knowledge through teaching and research, and will continue to democratize technical expertise to their respective immediate communities. While our higher education institutions uphold these mandates, the Commission also secures its directive of coordinated partnerships with all the sectors of our society. The Commission affirms the conviction that it is through the bayanihan spirit that Filipinos can rise above the crisis and emergencies. This is an assertion of the Commission that tertiary education must espouse the notions, procedures and processes of 21st century learning. The education of the new millennium connotes revolutionized approaches to realize excellent teaching and learning that are at par with international standards. This pandemic has surely taught us to fully realize that the Philippine higher education needs to be revitalized for futures-thinking. Covid-19 pandemic made us understand that we should shift from the traditional schemes of education and adhere with the parameters of sustainable education instead.

Again, my gratitude to the UST Alumni Association Incorporated for this given opportunity to impart some of the Commission's initiative to at least mitigate the effects of this health pandemic. May this catalyze further partnerships of the government and non-government agencies with the Commission on Higher Education as we continue to heal and learn as one. Thank you.