AAIG 2021 SUMMIT WEBINAR 1 TRANSCRIPT

OPENING REMARKS

Prof. Cheryl Ramos Peralta, DrPH, PTRP
Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, University of Santo Tomas

I congratulate the UST Alumni Association Incorporated and the UST Graduate School Center for Continuing Professional Education for this very successful and timely undertaking. The AAIG Summit 2021 with a theme National Multi-sectoral Summit for Educational Transformation: An Academe – Alumni - Industry - Government Collaboration. The University of Santo Tomas is one with you in this worthwhile activity and we are very proud of our alumni's initiatives in spearheading a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges of a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous or VUCA world. The University of Santo Tomas continues to dedicate itself to the formation of competent and compassionate professionals, committed to the service of the Church, the nation and the global community. In its 409 years of delivering quality Catholic education, UST has produced thousands of alumni leaders who shape the future of society. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, a great number of Thomasians serve the country and the world in various capacities and industries, helping us overcome the unprecedented disruptions over current time. In the month of August 2021, the University of Santo Tomas had the privilege of participating in the Technical Working Group (TWG) convened by the Senate of the Philippines to draft an act to create a second Congressional Commission on education to assess and evaluate the state of Philippine education and recommend innovative and targeted reforms in education, otherwise known as EDCOM 2. The Technical Working Group was convened by the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture under honorable Senator Win Gatchalian, joined with the Senate Committee on Higher Technical and Vocational Education headed by a fellow alumnus honorable Senator Joel Villaneva, was very instrumental to our inclusion as a member of the TWG. The TWG was participated in by policy makers and key players in Philippine education, including the Department of Education, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and the Commission on Higher Education. EDCOM 2 recognizes that there is a need for transformative, concrete and targeted reforms in education and the University is honored to be heard in this forum on behalf of its internal and external stakeholders including the thousands of students and alumni that we serve every academic year. In its position paper to the Senate, UST raised its concerns about learning gaps identified among Filipino students in basic education based on international competency standards, as reported by the Philippine Business for Education (PBEd) in 2021, which are expected to later cascade toward their capability to perform in higher education and subsequently meet the rigors of the future workplace.

These gaps may be aggravated by learning losses brought about by school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as reported by UNESCO, at all levels of education. The impact is expected to be greatest in basic education, but students in higher education may likewise suffer from learning losses due to the absence of opportunity for hands-on practice of skills needed for their future profession and the challenges of rendering adequate validation and assessment of the attainment of learning outcomes. These learning gaps and learning losses may reduce the capability of our graduates in higher education to fulfill workplace expectations, potentially contributing to slow school to work transitions and future unemployment or underemployment, as has been reported by PBEd. Given the shrinking half-life of knowledge as published by (angel?) in 2013 in light of the rapidly changing needs of society and industry 4.0, even in anticipation of industry 5.0 as has been recently published by some literature, these learning gaps shall widen exponentially unless arrested in the soonest possible time. Addressing these learning gaps in higher levels of education or within the school to work transition will require additional resources that may not be available to all educational institutions or industries, absorbing the products of our educational system unless adequate government support are made available to both public and private sectors. As it is the Covid-19 pandemic continues to bring significant financial challenges to the private education sector and the economic sector, and government support is crucial to allow them to recover from the impact of this global crisis and help address the skills gap among our graduates. Thus, UST recommended that EDCOM 2 be undertaken as a multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary initiative involving legislative, education and industry sectors, ensuring public and private representations to guarantee a comprehensive assessment of the current status of education at all levels, identify the evolving needs of all involved sectors, establish best practices and develop potential strategies that may be undertaken to solve the current crisis in education. The AAIG Summit 2021 is a valuable step in this direction. This is indeed a great opportunity for feedback and continuing conversation for future engagements and to build a robust ecosystem where fast incubation and birth of innovative pathways lead to inclusive life success and national development. May we develop powerful partnerships that will not only prepare fresh graduates for the world of work but likewise reskill and upskill current professionals to help them adapt to the rapidly changing demands of the workplace. With connection and collaboration, may we address this world with a VUCA solution as stated by Bob Johansen, vision, understanding, clarity and adaptability with agility. Let us create a vision of our preferred future, understand connections by listening to our stakeholders, clearly and quickly make sense of the details of the chaos around us, and adapt quickly to apply solutions. We look forward to meaningful dialogues in this four day AAIG summit 2021. Thank you very much.