

# Defining Excellence Along the Lines of Relevance

Accomplishment Report  
of the UP Department of Journalism  
June 2005 to June 2006

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The University of the Philippines Department of Journalism is a Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Center of Excellence, the only one in the field of journalism education. This is a testament to the impeccable track record of the department, the oldest in the UP College of Mass Communication (CMC), in producing the graduates who make a difference in the practice of the media profession.

But more than the quality of its teaching, the department's academic excellence is also manifested in the respect that it has earned from the mass media sector. The latter, after all, sees the department not just as the source of the best and the brightest journalism graduates in the country but, more importantly, an ally in defending and upholding press freedom.

The political crisis besetting the country makes it necessary for the department to make its curriculum relevant to the times and to make its voice heard on matters affecting the practice of the media profession. Now, more than ever, the department needs to define the excellence that it has been known for along the lines of relevance. Only then can it become responsive to the times, particularly the needs of both media practitioners and audiences.

This report seeks to present the department's accomplishments from June 2005 to June 2006.

## CONTEXT

To know the context of departmental activities from June 2005 to June 2006, it is necessary to review my vision paper titled "Of Where We Stand and What to Do," excerpts of which may be found below: (See **Annex A** for the full text)

(A) culture of impunity persists in our society wracked by age-old problems of poverty and injustice. It has come to a point where the Philippines is now described as the most murderous place in the world to practice journalism. As if this were not enough, various bills are now pending in Congress which have dire implications on the media profession. The previous months saw government

officials issuing statements that are clear threats to freedom of the press and expression.

In order to be relevant to the goings-on in media, we need to be responsive. The public should know where we stand on major media-related issues and concerns. Our curriculum must not only reflect the needs of the mass media sector but also demand from journalists the highest standards of media practice that we have passionately taught through the years.

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I offer a leadership that is both progressive and proactive. The task at hand is daunting – some may say Herculean – and there is a need for all of us to unite. I think we can put aside personal differences if we establish certain points of unity with regard to our understanding of the mass media situation and our subsequent points of intervention.

### **What to do**

Internally, systems must be strengthened or established to have an atmosphere that is conducive for our faculty members to effectively teach, conduct research and perform extension work. In addition, I will ensure transparency in departmental operations through consultation and consensus building with the faculty.

Just like the management of the (Office of Research and Publication), I propose to immediately come up with targets for the next 12 months for approval by the journalism faculty. At this point, I would like to present major activities that can be undertaken by our department:

- Active participation in the CMC Revaluation Committee, with the end-view of revising the Journalism curriculum to make it more multimedia-oriented and socially relevant
- Support in reorganizing the CMC into a “professional school”
- Organization of two (2) Lopez-Jaena Community Journalism Workshops during the semestral and summer breaks
- Various activities related to making public our stand on major media-related issues and concerns, like writing press releases, congressional lobbying, organizing roundtable discussions and networking with media organizations
- Periodic meetings with media organizations
- Maximization of CHED funds
- Systems analysis of departmental operations
- Upgrading of facilities and equipment
- Review of important academic policies like hiring and tenure

Let us all try to work together as we make our department relevant to the times, and as we assert our leading role in journalism education in the country.

I presented this at our first departmental meeting last June 15, 2005 and the faculty members present did not raise any objections to my vision paper. In particular, we all agreed that the department should take a stand on major media-related issues and concerns. In fact, the minutes of the meeting read: “We should try our best to encourage CMC faculty members from other departments and the UP Film Institute to also sign whatever statements we plan to release to the media” (Sec. 5.1.2, Minutes of the Meeting, June 15, 2005).

#### TAKING A STAND WHEN IT MATTERED

With regard to taking a stand on issues and concerns, Dean Nicanor Tiongson said in his presentation on March 19, 2003 that the College “should strengthen its external linkages so that it will be recognized as a leader in matters relating to mass communication. CMC should take a stand on national issues and/or sponsor debates and lectures on those issues within the College and the University.”

From June 2005 to June 2006, I drafted, circulated, revised (if necessary) and gathered signatures for five statements that put on record the position of selected faculty members (as well as students and staff in one particular case) on various media-related issues. (See **Annexes B, C, D, E and F** for the full text)

<b>Date of Release</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of Signatories (faculty members, unless otherwise specified)</b>
June 19, 2005	Erring on the side of repression	Expression of concern over an NTC memorandum and a Justice Secretary’s warning regarding how media should cover the allegedly wiretapped conversation between the President and an election official	18
July 7, 2005	Unabated murder of journalists could lead to the President’s ouster	Condemnation of the killing of South Cotabato-based radio broadcaster Rolando Morales on July 3, 2005	18
Oct. 7, 2005	Military, police should respect press freedom	Denunciation of military and police harassment of <i>Manila Times</i> photojournalist Rene	13

		Dilan on Oct. 2, 2005	
Nov. 16, 2005	The President should know the workings of the press	Reaction to the President's statement on Nov. 10, 2005 that the media must cast aside their "bad boy" image and focus only on "winners"	14
Feb. 27, 2006	Rescind Proclamation No. 1017	Opposition to the declaration of the state of national emergency on Feb. 24, 2006 which resulted in the savaging of press freedom	124 (faculty members, students and staff)

These statements reflect not just the position of those who signed but also the College's clear understanding of the media situation, earning for the College the respect of those in the media profession.

In keeping with the College's commitment to defend press freedom, 10 faculty members of the College – six of them from the department – were among the signatories to a petition filed in the Court of Appeals in March 2006 which seeks to prevent the National Telecommunications Commission, Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Justice and the Executive Secretary from issuing any form of content-based prior restraint of media.

#### CO-SPONSORING FORUMS

The department co-sponsored forums with the following organizations:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Activity</b>
June 21, 2005	CMC auditorium	National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP)	Philippine Media and the Hello Garci Tapes: A Roundtable Discussion
June 24, 2005	Bulwagang Recto	UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS)	Gloriagate Tapes: What the Public Should Know
July 14, 2005	CMC auditorium	Canadian Embassy	McLuhan Forum Series (attended by Amb. Peter Sutherland; main speaker was Tess Bacalla)
June 15, 2006	CMC auditorium	NUJP	Global Day of Solidarity with Journalists in Iraq

In my capacity as department chair and upon the Dean's instructions, I participated in the following public hearings of the Senate:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Inviting Committee</b>	<b>Nature of Invitation</b>
Nov. 30, 2005	Senate Committee on Public Information and Mass Media	To present position paper on Senate Bill No. 1120 or the “Right of Reply” bill (See <b>Annex G</b> )
Feb. 7, 2006	Senate Committee on Public Information and Mass Media	To give inputs on how the Senate can help uphold press freedom

#### ORGANIZING THE LOPEZ-JAENA JOURNALISM WORKSHOP

From October 23 to 29, 2005, the department organized the 14<sup>th</sup> Lopez Jaena Journalism Workshop that focuses on media and gender sensitivity. This was done in partnership with the UP Center for Women’s Studies (UP CWS). Resource persons were from the department and the UP CWS. There were 20 participants in the workshop.

The activity was funded by the CHED Center of Excellence grant.

#### CONTINUING THE PARTNERSHIP WITH BICOL UNIVERSITY

The department organized the Bicol University In-Company Training (ICT) 2006 from April 17 to May 16 which saw the participation of 79 BU journalism students. Five faculty members and a lecturer comprised the training team. For the actual internship, the department forged a partnership with an organization called Solidaridad. (See **Annex H**)

#### PREPARING FOR A NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF JOURNALISM EDUCATORS

Based on the concept paper I prepared, the planned National Conference of Journalism Educators to be organized by the department has the following objectives:

1. To inform journalism educators of the state of mass media in the Philippines, focusing on pressing issues and concerns and areas that require the academe’s intervention.
2. To analyze the state of journalism education in the Philippines and the initiatives done by government, non-government organizations and the academe to address problems confronting it.
3. To provide a venue for an exchange of ideas among journalism educators with regard to, among others, curricular content, teaching methods and standards of media practice.
4. To help bridge the gap between the academe and the mass media sector through the identification of specific areas of intervention.

5. To come up with resolutions on journalism education and media practice that will be approved by the participating educators and implemented in the latter's colleges and universities.
6. To help organize an Association of Journalism Educators of the Philippines after the conference with a mandate to, among others, implement the resolutions made at the conference. (This, however, is subject to the decision of the participants!)

Faculty members and school officials from other colleges and universities were approached and they signified their cooperation if this conference pushes through. The concept paper, along with the proposed budget, has been submitted to CHED for possible funding. (See **Annex I**)

## REVIEWING CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

As a member of the Revaluation Committee, I participated in the reviews of the College's various curricular programs. The department upheld the multi-media orientation of the Journalism program in giving its comments on the proposed curricular revisions of other departments and the UP Film Institute.

In the same way, their comments on the proposed diploma and master's programs are being taken into account as the assigned faculty members revise the concept paper for future presentation to the committee.

## HIRING COMPETENT FACULTY MEMBERS

Given that faculty items are limited, the hiring of faculty members must be done with utmost care so that only the best and the brightest will be hired. This, however, proves to be a tall order as the University cannot provide the remuneration that is commensurate to the credentials of those who are qualified.

Be that as it may, the department managed to hire the following faculty members who have an excellent track record in the practice of the journalism profession.

1. **Evelyn O. Katigbak as Senior Lecturer 1.** She writes for various publications and works as a writer-researcher and segment producer for a television program. She earned her BA in Journalism and MA in Asian Studies from UP Diliman.
2. **Lucia P. Tangi as Senior Lecturer 1.** She has been engaged in news and feature writing and editing for 15 years in the Philippines, Hong Kong and Japan. She earned her BA Comm (Journalism) degree from UP Diliman and is currently finishing her MA in Asian Studies.
3. **Yvonne T. Chua as Assistant Professor 6** (*subject to CAPC's approval*). A professional journalist for 25 years, Ms. Chua is training director of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and a regular writer for *I Report* (formerly *i*), the PCIJ's quarterly magazine. She is a professorial lecturer at the

UP CMC where she teaches journalism part-time at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In June 2005, Ms. Chua was elevated to the Jaime V. Ongpin Awards for Investigative Journalism's Hall of Fame after winning the first prize three times in five years.

## MERIT PROMOTIONS

Faculty members of the department were meritoriously promoted based on the documents they submitted. The CAPC upheld the decision of the DAPC (Journalism) with regard to the recommended rank of each faculty member.

When the UP administration decided to cut a faculty member's promotion by one step, I immediately wrote a letter of appeal to the concerned authorities. Because of the arguments presented, the UP administration upheld the DAPC's decision on the number of steps this particular faculty member deserves.

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND MEDIA LITERACY

The department organized a seminar on Linux on September 24, 2005 at the Beltran Newsroom which saw the participation of faculty members from the department and the UP Film Institute. The seminar was given by the UP Computer Center and was aimed to look at the possibility of integrating Linux software into the J 121 (The Newsroom) and J 122 (Publication Design and Layout) courses.

Aside from this, the department has also prepared the outline for the Media Literacy Module on How to Read Newspapers. This is part of the College's project to promote media literacy among the people, particularly high school teachers.

## SYSTEMATIZING DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

The following measures were made to ensure smoother and more efficient departmental operations:

1. **Mailing list group.** The department now has a mailing list group (upjourn@yahoogroups.com) which makes for faster and more efficient communications with regular faculty members.
2. **Organized meetings.** The department keeps minutes of departmental meetings for the reference of concerned faculty members.
3. **Student-Faculty Assembly.** The department organized a student-faculty assembly on July 20, 2005. Some of the matters raised may be found below: (Sec. 8, Minutes of the Meeting, Aug. 10, 2005)
  - a. "The Chair said that about 40 students who attended the assembly unanimously agreed to the department's proposal to increase laboratory

- fees for J 117 (from P0 to P600), J 121 (from P500 to P600), J 122 (from P500 to P600) and J 123 (from P300 to P400).
- b. "The students present said that J 195 and J 196 should have more variety. Among the topics that can be discussed there are Sports Writing and Media and Gender.
  - c. "To discuss other aspects of news writing, J 102 should be divided into two three-unit courses consisting of News Writing 1 and News Writing 2.
  - d. "The following subjects should have one-and-a-half hour sessions (Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday) instead of the current practice of allowing three-hour sessions:
    1. J 100
    2. J 101
    3. J 192
    4. J 103
    5. J 111
4. **Thesis advising.** The department now has a new system of selecting thesis advisers. Instead of the past practice of letting students choose their thesis advisers, the faculty members are now made to choose from the students' thesis topics.
  5. **Saturday classes.** Regular faculty members are now required to teach undergraduate courses during weekdays. For graduate courses, they can opt to hold classes on Saturday. Lecturers can still teach graduate or graduate courses on Saturday.
  6. **One-and-a-half hour classes for selected courses.** Based on the agreement at the student-faculty assembly in July 2005, all faculty members are now asked to observe one-and-a-half hour sessions for selected courses.
  7. **Distribution of SET ratings** (past and current). In order for regular and part-time faculty members to know how their students evaluated them through the years, they were provided past and current SET ratings.

## UPGRADING FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

The following items were purchased from June 2005 to June 2006 using the CHED COE grant, EDF and other sources.

1. Seven (7) office tables
2. Four (4) AMD Athlon computer sets
3. Four (4) computer tables
4. Two (2) 128 MB flash drives
5. One (1) 80 GB external hard disk
6. One (1) HP Deskjet 1280 printer
7. One (1) Microtek Scanner 5800
8. One (1) Sony DVD Handycam
9. One (1) memory stick
10. One (1) battery pack



11. Two (2) video camera bags
12. One (1) tripod
13. One (1) Adobe installation CD
14. One (1) Norton Anti-Virus installation CD
15. One (1) Microsoft Office installation CD
16. One (1) cassette tape recorder
17. One (1) unit compressor
18. One (1) Fire Extinguisher HCFC123
19. Three (3) exhaust fans

**Activated LAN Connection.** Computers of faculty members now have LAN connection, giving them Internet connection and access to the department secretary's laser printer.

**Room Improvement.** M 209 and the BNR were provided exhaust fans for better ventilation.

#### OTHER PLANS

Due to financial constraints and other reasons, there were plans discussed in departmental meetings which will hopefully be pursued in the future.

**15<sup>th</sup> Lopez Jaena Journalism Workshop.** There were plans to hold it in April or May 2006, but there were no funds available. Some faculty members were open to the idea of having Human Rights Reporting as theme for the workshop and the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) as the venue. The theme was floated as a result of the unabated killings of journalists and activists and the consequent need not for journalists not to desensitize the audience to the spate of violence.

**Book project.** The department planned to publish a book with the working title *Contemporary Issues in Philippine Journalism*. The budget has been prepared but there was no available funding. (See **Annex J**)

**Dean Armando Malay Lecture Series.** The chair floated this idea and most faculty members found it a good one. The lecture series which will be held in different schools aims to discuss issues related to the practice of the journalism profession. Its primary target audiences are high school students and teachers.

**Proposed PhD in Journalism.** Given that a senior faculty member is chair of the committee assigned to review the College's PhD program, it may be appropriate to introduce a PhD in Journalism program, the only one of its kind in the country if ever. Two faculty members have been assigned to do studies on this.

## CONCLUSION

The department proved its relevance to the media and national situations through its various activities. By articulating its position on vital issues and concerns and forging partnerships with media and other organizations, the excellence that the Department of Journalism has been known for is now defined along the lines of relevance.

It is hoped that this trend will continue.

June 23, 2006

Department of Journalism