

A Rendezvous with PLM's Milestone History

The appointment of Atty. Rafaelito M. Garayblas as PLM's Executive Vice President on 07 July 2009, while concurrently serving as Secretary to the Mayor of the City of Manila, came at the heels of the resignation of his predecessor from said post. As the next-in-rank executive, it was an apt springboard for his subsequent elevation to the position of Acting President as the logical successor to the presidency when the same was eventually vacated.

Atty. Garayblas is not a new-comer to PLM, after all. He served PLM as Regent in 1996 to 2000, taking steward of the University then through top policy decisions and development frameworks.

The Vision-Mission

Coming in as a long-time public servant at the various echelons of the government gave PLM an opportunity to breathe in a new breeze of culture and perspective. Endowed with a firm grasp of an ideal public institution, Atty. Garayblas knew it well how an agency of public nature must serve as the well-spring of service excellence while, at the same time, keeping itself focused on essential reforms and effecting sensible frugality. Productive workforce, prudent financial prioritization, and efficient utilization of resources -- otherwise known as backyard clean-up -- were the tactical gains that he was firm to realize in the initial days of his management.

By rationalizing the mobilization of institutional resources, including the implementation of austerity measures in 2012, while these were delicate community issues, PLM was able to sustain, if not exceeded and raised, the bar of the primacy of its academic excellence, while proving the viability of the concept that equitable institutional savings can be realized. Resolute and steadfast as any effective technocrat manager is, he triumphed in laying down a foundation for a new set of standards of resource management and optimization -- maximizing the outputs or results from the investments, while reasonably minimizing the expenses and resource consumption.

By espousing this battle cry, Atty. Garayblas took an arduous and ostensibly quixotic battle into his hands and traversed, so to speak, the road less travelled. This, he is perfectly cognizant of, is a cultural hazard commonly besetting a reformer. Little did anyone realize, as others didn't see it coming, what were to redound from the wisdom of waging this lonely battle. In the process, PLM's mettle of strength was put to test. As any warrior in the battlefield would, the PLM community discovered a wondrous miracle of inner vigor and resilience when faced with sheer challenges.

Unfazed by misapprehensions that frugality would lead to lesser achievements, destiny has proven to be favorable to his avowed vision-mission as PLM soared even higher and scaled greater heights during his watch. Scholars and alumni alike brought countless accolades to the name of PLM. In rapid succession, PLM rocked the elite community of excellent schools with landmark feats. Stunning board exam dominance, inspiring research environment, modern academic services, growing institutional linkages and stronger industry recognition were just few of the proofs of PLM's expanding presence in the academic landscape during his presidency.

The Institutional Legacy

On top of sustaining the legacy of excellence that is the birthright of PLM, the Garayblas presidency is characterized by sensible innovative changes of unmistakable impact at the backdrop of judicious spending. Institutionalization of needed technological reforms in the academic services and the rapidly growing development partnership with the industry were among the visible outputs of his term.

Management Style

Undazzled by the glare of limelight and already inundated by the concerns of a bigger community where PLM belongs which is the capital city of Manila, Atty. Garayblas focused mainly on macro and strategic policy issues at the top management level, while devolving micro-management concerns to able managers, as any chief executive would. Striking the right balance, he empowered the institutional leadership by according the vice presidents, directors, deans and chiefs of offices the utmost latitude to set the tone of leadership in their respective spheres of domain that is supportive of the academic excellence of the University. He tasked the executive vice president to ensure that apt leadership direction and institutional support are provided the community. This management protocol is well-suited to bring luster to the leadership acumen of each unit head to shine in his performance in leading his constituents forward to greater success. As intended, each of them has developed a deep sense of ownership of the overall positive fruition of their sincere collective efforts.

Institutional Direction and Initiatives

Through the decades, PLM has made a strong brand name for itself in the academic landscape. The Garayblas presidency focused on delivering a stronger impact by reaping successive top dominance in licensure board examinations and similar pursuits. His term was accentuated by a milestone achievement that only during his presidential watch was PLM able to produce a double top 1 in a single board exam¹ while other top places were conspicuously dominated by PLM alumni.

▪ Institutional Development thru Research strengthening

To underscore the need for a multi-throng development pursuit along its triadic mandate, PLM undertook a strengthening of the Research foothold of the faculty and scholars. Annually, starting 2011, September was adopted as Development Policy Research Month (DPRM), a month-long celebration highlighting the importance of sound policy research and evidence-based policy to national development. For the first time in eight (8) years, PLM became a partner of the national government in ascribing premium on the significance of research. PLM paved an inspiring venue for colloquia and exhibits of best researches, poster presentations, lecture-fora and knowledge-sharing sessions with World Bank and other institutions like CHed, as among the highlights of the annual month-long celebration. In 2012, the maiden issue of the PLM Research Bulletin was published.

▪ Institutional Development thru Modern Services

Exhibiting fervor towards facing dynamic challenges, the Garablas presidency has instituted ICT-based projects of great impact to academic services. Significantly, these technological enhancements were developed for free or at no cost to the government that proscribed even a small dent to the coffers of public funds. That was made possible either through the ingenuity of in-house talents who toiled endlessly and tirelessly with care for the welfare of PLM or through strong development partnerships with industry leaders, the offshoot of the synergy of which includes, among others, the deployment of the online *eGrades System*. It piloted in 2010 and was institutionalized in full-scale in all colleges by early 2012, cutting days of unproductive loitering of students to a minimum. It is now on its third version with prospects for an Android mobile application to roll out soon. Also in the pipeline are the *Unified PLM ID system* to be piloted in SY 2013-2014, the *PE/ROTC/CWTS enrollment system* and the *Document tracking and management system* leading to paperless transactions.

▪ Institutional Development thru Industry-supported Facilities and Curriculum Enhancements

Since 2009, PLM has engendered the goodwill of the industry. Institutional support is provided by industry development partners. This includes the conversion in 2012 of an old classroom into a state-of-the-art multimedia Accenture Ideas Exchange Room, an enhanced IT-based facility aimed at improving the educational experience of PLM scholars through a unique industry environment for germinating small ideas into excellent concepts. Earlier in late 2009, the Engineering Lab 3 was likewise converted into a SMART Wireless Engineering Education Program (SWEEP) laboratory.

¹ August 2012 Physical Therapy licensure examination. Two (2) Top 1 placers led other PLM board placers: Top 3, Top 4, Top 7, Top 8 and Top 9.

To accelerate knowledge-transfer, Microsoft has led the way in infusing a massive retooling of PLM's computer studies curriculum by developing syllabi consistent with current industry standards and assigning industry experts to intensively support the Computer Studies department. In the same vein, Accenture, a global leader in delivering high-performance solutions, is also supporting PLM in advancing its curricular programs through a direct industry expert participation which is poised to place PLM as its pioneering development partner for this kind of undertaking. Through this shared development measure, PLM gets a closer aperture to the finest industry best practices and development programs that directly benefit our scholars and curricular programs.

Other development partners in achieving a shared development policy framework through the Official Institutional Linkages of PLM, among others, are the finest industry brand names IBM and Hewlett Packard. PLM is among the elite few that these global giants have trusted to partner with.

A score of past and upcoming program enhancements in the industry-academe institutional linkage will spell to the greater extent PLM's pursuit for a higher dimension of scholarship and of raising the bar of its excellence, as well as in sustaining those gains. The benefits from this strong industry recognition includes, among others, priority hiring of PLM graduates and assured job placements even months before graduation, technology sessions and intensive trainings for faculty and scholars, priority OJT placements, scholarship and award grants, donation of hardware and software, mobile broadcast and signal boosting, and official PLM email provisioning with online learning resources.

▪ **Institutional Development: The Official CEP Media of PLM (CEP)**

By providing strong institutional support to the CEP, it has matured into a ubiquitous regular frontline service program of PLM. This enabled PLM to directly touch base with its important stakeholders and vice versa, and to blast off news flash and to feed similar essential advisories directly to their media inbox. To strengthen the CEP, other earlier development initiatives were integrated on 10 December 2010 with the more recent media tools through an authority granted by the Acting President² upon the recommendation of the EVP. The institutionalized integration of the CEP media tools included the official PLM website, the official PLM InfoBoard, the official PLM social media, the official PLM email, the official PLM-AV system, and the Infomercial Videowalls, among others. The Social Media policies³ were formally approved on 12 January 2011.

With the EVP's approval⁴ on 02 February 2011, new services and expanded benefits were strengthened and institutionalized -- and made available or offered to the various stakeholders of PLM -- to the full advantage of the entire PLM community. To stretch the spate of the CEP's institutionalization into the core fabric of PLM's operations an extra mile, a Presidential approval was stamped on the CEP Program Manager's content management of all audio-video broadcasts⁵. Further, the updating of mobile contacts database as a well-preserved convention⁶ is intended to ensure that PLM's content messaging is cut across PLM's important stakeholders in a flash.

Serving the public on a 24x7 fashion, queries and concerns from the public were replied to even at the wee hours of dawn or up to the outskirts of the morning. There is no holiday, neither day-off nor break, for PLM. No disaster has ever hampered PLM from instantly replying to public queries, broadcasting urgent and essential advisories, and posting veritable institutional information. With its constant presence through its various CEP media tools, PLM is always there whenever and wherever one needs enlightenment and elucidation -- anytime, anywhere.

More importantly, the CEP's vision is to effectuate "meaningful cultural revolution" among the entire community by inspiring the stakeholders to achieve a higher plenitude of excellence, i.e.:

- 1) *On the part of the public servants*, a jettison of the crass stigma of utter inefficiency and selfish mileage that have hounded the civil bureaucracy since the Spanish regime. In lieu, it is envisaged that they shall transform into a world-class epitome of selfless sacrifice for the good of the public and the nation that they seek to serve -- as the noblest form of human service;
- 2) *On the part of the scholars*, the abandonment of mediocrity and timidity. In lieu, the CEP inspires them to scale greater heights in the pursuit of scholarship so as to home in more repute to the cap of PLM and carry the name and colors of PLM with dignity, pride and honor.

² Presidential approval of Memo ITC-10-1124-01, with the subsequent Social Media Policies formally approved by the EVP under Memo ITC-11-0107-01.

³ Accessible at the Downloads (Notices) section of the Official PLM Website (www.plm.edu.ph/notices-main.html#CEP) and at www.plm.edu.ph/PLM.CEP.html.

⁴ Memo ITC-11-0201-01, a program development measure, pertaining to a collaboration setup among all colleges and offices, represented by the EVP, to optimize the benefits of PLM's official social media and create new services and benefits for the entire PLM stakeholders under the Official CEP Media, as a priority dev't policy.

⁵ Memo ITC-11-1128-01, institutionalizing the content management of audio-visual broadcasts as adjunct to the EVP's approval of Memo ITC-11-02-01.

⁶ Memo ITC-13-0416-01, updating the mobile contacts database of the Official CEP Media, translating the institutionalization into a well-preserved policy.

▪ **Nationally-coordinated and Locally-developed Social Services**

PLM has exhibited a strong affinity to landmark social services of national origin. As the nation has started to become cohesive in co-opting well-coordinated synergy in combating social maladies, PLM has extended a strong mutual cooperation towards this end. Starting with the perpetual voluntary blood donation program in tandem with the DOH-Philippine Blood Center in 2009 to curb the lack of supply of healthy blood, the network for sustainable implementation has expanded to include Gender and Development (GAD) in 2010 with the Philippine Commission on Women for gender sensitivity and women empowerment, including the Violence Against Women & Children in 2011 with the CSC; the Manila Bay clean-up in 2010 with DENR, LandBank, and other public and private agencies for environmental protection and curbing ecological degradation; and the community volunteerism in 2012 with the Gawad Kalinga-Intramuros to build brighter communities.

Some of the notable programs that were spearheaded or developed by the PLM community were:

For out-of-school youth: Various livelihood and life skills trainings; Sports activities; Modular and supplementary alternative education; eLearning training under the Summer IT Literacy Program; and the establishment of the PLM Community Service Learning Center at Baluarte de San Andres.

Community-based: Lead agency in the formation of the Intramuros Volunteer Movement (IVM) adjunct to the Intramuros Administration, and the Intramuros Student Ambassadors program; disaster relief operations in tandem with ABS-CBN Foundation for the typhoon victims of Ondoy, Pedring, Quiel, Sendong and Habagat; Learning center for Brgys. 657/658; and the Community organizing by PLM social work students.

University: Health promotion and wellness awareness programs, including the QuitsS (Quit Smoking Support) program pursuant to the Anti-Smoking law and the Sin Tax law; Garbage rummaging and recycling; and livelihood skills and product promotion for lady employees.

▪ **Institutional Development thru In-house Facilities Enhancement**

With prudent financial prioritization and efficient utilization of resources as among the focus of the Garayblas presidency, new academic and administrative facilities were acquired to amplify the efficiency and productivity of the various PLM communities. In early 2012, the CET Computer Laboratories acquired 53 units of the latest model of desktops for the use of the scholars. On 29 May 2013, the CM Medicine Training Center was inaugurated at GCA Room 103 for the community-based health advocacy of PLM. This year, several propping up and renovation rooms were implemented, including the CM Student Council Room at GB and the CN Student Council Lounge Area at GK, the expansion of the reading areas of the University Library, the CET Faculty Room at GV, the walkway between the GCA and GV, re-asphalting of roadways and parking areas, repair of the air-conditioned facilities (especially at the Justo Albert Auditorium), electrical works in various rooms and offices, installation of permanent chairs at UAC and waiting areas at the GV main lobby, and several other ground maintenance works.

In 2012, the CLA established its CLA AVR Room with 5 units of new desktop units, while providing 10 units to the staff and 3 units for faculty use.

In the 2nd Quarter of 2013, the various colleges in Gusaling Lacson, previously isolated from the network, were also connected online to the Internet and have started to benefit from the ongoing network expansion program. These include the CME, CAE, CLA, CTHTIM, CHD, CMC and CS. Previously, too, the CM was also connected to the main network, which Internet access is imperative in the utilization of the Medical eJournal that was purchased in 2012 from the globally-acclaimed EBSSCO, the same being utilized by various Ivy League universities in the United States and other leading universities elsewhere.

Several equipment were likewise utilized to support the academic excellence of the University. Modest as those may be, with all the accolades and landmark feats reaped during his watch never been seen in PLM's history, we could not ask for more. Relieving as it is, the Garayblas presidency has been a well-spring in PLM's milestone history.