

# EARLY SOL A. GADONG

*Service-Oriented Leadership* 

PLAN OF ACTION AS FACULTY REGENT 2025-2026



## ***Kaayohan para sa Tanan: On the Office of the Faculty Regent as a Champion of Wellness, Well-being, and Welfare for All***

I started my teaching career as a college faculty member before teaching in the high school and graduate programs. While in the basic education unit, I found myself having to constantly justify our role within the university and explain how our context differed from that of higher education. At times, I encountered situations I hadn't anticipated, and serving as Academic Union officer was a path that took even me by surprise.

This unexpected turn brought me to the frontlines as someone who managed to overcome her inhibitions to fight for the rights and welfare of the administrative staff, faculty, REPS, and even the JO/COS and agency-hires of the university. It has always been a daunting task, but it is also one that is fairly easy for me to do, especially when I remind myself of the nearly 6,000 academic personnel we are representing as officers of the Academic Union.

Earlier this year, nearly 300 UP faculty members gathered in Manila during the Faculty Conference to talk about our needs and concerns, and it was striking how similar our issues were regardless of our specialization or campus. Overwhelmingly, the faculty of the university identified urgent needs in improving infrastructure, properly allocating resources, and creating an enabling environment for teaching, research, and extension work.

These are the same sentiments of faculty members, time and again, during our conduct of Ikot Unyon activities. There is a clamor for enhanced support for professional growth through faculty development programs, mentorship, transparent and streamlined processes, additional plantilla items, and reduced administrative burdens. The current administration's renewed emphasis on public service was echoed as well while making a push for faculty wellness and the urgent need to address looming threats to our academic freedom and human rights.

The Office of the Faculty Regent plays a crucial role in ensuring that these issues and concerns of the faculty sector reach the Board of Regents. The OFR is instrumental in cultivating a faculty body that serves in solidarity with one another. Thus, our current circumstances demand that the next Faculty Regent is grounded and well aware of the consequential issues of the faculty. My visits to our different Constituent Universities to consult with faculty members convinced me of the need for a Faculty Regent who is a true and tested voice of the rank-and-file, one who embodies a service-oriented leadership, and has a track record of championing wellness, well-being, and welfare for all.

My plan of action as Faculty Regent is grounded in **KAAYOHAN**, or the collective wellness of the UP community and the Filipino people, through **Service-Oriented Leadership**. In the next two years, the Office of the Faculty Regent will work towards the following:

### ***KAbaskog (Visayan: Strength)***

Healthy community members naturally lead to a more productive institution that achieves academic excellence.

As Faculty Regent, I shall ensure a strong faculty sector by supporting programs for faculty wellness such as expanding eHOPE provisions to include additional annual physical exam coverage, counseling, and purchase of maintenance medicines.

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I will champion active mobility, inclusive spaces, and sustainable transportation options for the wellness of both the faculty and the environment. I will support the fight for a higher UP budget and ensure that university spaces are used for purposes that will enhance academic functions, rather than commercial ones.

## **Amping** (Cebuano Bisaya: To care or Take care)

As your next Faculty Regent, I will prioritize faculty welfare by uniting the faculty to push the Board for more plantilla items, liveable wages, and responsive benefits. I will advocate for enabling environments that will nurture young faculty members through mentoring systems that truly uplift them and not one that exposes them to predatory circumstances or treats them as free labor. I will push for a review of housing benefit policies and advocate for the expansion of these benefits, ensuring that the University develops fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory criteria for applicants.

There is also a glaring need to look after our retired faculty members who have dedicated their lives in service to the university. Your Faculty Regent will lobby for programs that will provide regular wellness activities and other benefits for them.

Moreover, following a public mental health approach, promoting mental health through the creation of policies, raising of awareness, and provision of support should be integral in the various services and programs of the university. This can include provisions for an inclusive bereavement leave (e.g., for LGBTQ+ partnerships), stress-free commute options, and social housing for newly hired faculty members.

While students have guidance services specialists to go to for psychological support, university employees, including the faculty, are left to their own devices. As Faculty Regent, I will amplify the call for the inclusion of more mental health services in the eHope coverage (e.g., psychotherapy) and the provision for at least one mental health professional (e.g., clinical psychologist, psychiatrist), or its alternative (e.g., telepsychiatry), in each CU.

## **Yakat** (Hiligaynon: Invite/persuade/attract)

The research function of faculty members is central to the university's mission of advancing knowledge. However, the demands of teaching, administrative responsibilities, and public service often limit time for in-depth research and writing. As Faculty Regent, I intend to push for the institutionalization of a dedicated Writing Leave and/or Writing Load Credit to attract faculty to engage in more intensive, longer-term research projects, persuade those who may have foregone research due to workload to prioritize their scholarly goals, and encourage early-career faculty to begin establishing their research agendas.

As union leaders, one of the things that was always brought to our attention was the seemingly arbitrary formulation and implementation of policies related to recruitment, renewal, regularization, tenure, and promotion. Your Faculty Regent will survey these policies and practices and consequently recommend mechanisms to ensure their fair, nuanced, and transparent implementation.

## **Olnos** (Kankanaey: Getting along well together)

As Faculty Regent, I will encourage harmonious relationships with one another by calling for the institutionalization of safe spaces and pushing for policies that uphold gender equality and inclusivity, particularly for women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other marginalized groups within the faculty, administrative staff, REPS, and student body.

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Our connections with the communities that we are a part of are crucial in fulfilling our mandate as a public service university. Thus, I will advocate for the support of public service activities that work towards the building of strong, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with various sectors including the Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities, emphasizing UP's commitment to serving marginalized groups over state forces.

At the same time, I will support the ongoing negotiations of university unions on liveable wages, just compensation, and regularization, and co-organize a system-wide and CU-wide CNA Orientation for university administrators.

## **Himangraw** (Waray: Conversation)

I will lead in fostering conversations and collaborations across CUs by organizing systemwide dialogues. The recently held Basic Education Summit led by the Office of the Faculty Regent has surfaced issues unique to the needs of the basic education units of the university. I intend to follow up on the resolutions arrived at in this summit. In a similar vein, a summit for our creatives would put a spotlight on the distinct concerns that they face. Surfacing their issues will allow us to collectively discuss possible solutions.

I will also hold similar conversations with faculty, researchers, and librarians to identify ways to improve university library resources and facilities that will strengthen UP's position as an advanced research university in all applicable disciplines.

Beyond being a venue where concerns can be aired, these FR-initiated conversations/summits/conferences will be designed to also produce interdisciplinary knowledge through collaborations across CUs.

## **Akademikong kalayaAN** (Filipino: Academic Freedom)

As your Faculty Regent, I will vigorously defend and uphold academic freedom, ensuring that UP remains a space where critical thinking and free expression thrive, and our sense of social responsibility is nurtured.

I shall, therefore, amplify the call to establish a system-wide and CU-wide Committee on Academic Freedom and Human Rights as an important mechanism to guarantee and protect the exercise of academic freedom within the University without interference, fear of reprisal, and violation of our right to expression in this era of rampant red-tagging. Towards this, I will move to strengthen national and international solidarity and collaboration with other institutions for the protection of human rights and academic freedom.

By itself, the Office of the Faculty Regent (OFR) is hardly a sufficient mechanism to ensure that all the issues and concerns of the faculty sector will be addressed, especially against the backdrop of a government that looks at its citizens as mere commodities. However, with the support of the faculty sector, I firmly believe that the OFR plays a crucial role in addressing our needs for democratic governance in the university. By exemplifying Service-Oriented Leadership, the Office of the Faculty Regent will vigorously work toward a faculty body whose wellness, well-being, and welfare are looked after by a university where faculty rights are upheld, academic freedom is defended, and public service is aligned with the needs of the nation.