

## For the Nation. Through the Regions.

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### The Regionalization Program

A little over thirty years ago, the College of Medicine conceived the idea of selectively admitting to the Philippine nation's premier medical school, deserving students from selected regions of the country particularly the underserved. It was only however, in 1985 that this program was implemented and which eventually included all the different regions of the Philippines and that of the country's indigenous people. The goal was for these students to practice medicine in their regions of origin after completing their medical education. This came to be known as the Regionalization Program (RP) of the University of the Philippines College of Medicine (UPCM).

In 1999 (with Dr. Daniel de la Paz, Jr. as Regionalization Program Committee (RPC) Chair, 1993-2003), a series of symposia was conducted and stringent criteria for acceptance to the program were formulated. The year 2000 paved the way for impact program implementation (with Dr. Jose C. Gonzales as RPC Chair, 2003-2010). This 2010 marks the 25th year of the Regionalization Program, which is continuously evolving, responsive to its fundamental objectives (with Dr. Abdel Jeffri A. Abdulla as current RPC Chair).

In essence, the choice of serving one's region of origin is completely the student's. It is a choice for acceptance into the most esteemed premier medical school of the Philippines. This choice is a patriotic one filled with social responsibility, tempered with entrance to the UPCM via academic merit. This choice comes with a legal obligation to fulfill the promise of serving the Filipino people in the regions for at least 5 years, and hopefully will encourage the RP students to stay and serve permanently in the regions.

The student will be one with fellow RP students in their dedication and service to the country.

### The Regionalization Program Students and their Activities

The RP students have organized themselves as the Regionalization Students Organization [*Gawa sa RP...Para sa RP* (Made in RP...For RP)], popularly known as RSO, uniting themselves towards a spirit of community-orientedness, social consciousness, and responsibility directed towards the empowerment of the regions and the upliftment of the underserved of the Philippines. RSO was established in the year 2001 with Dr. Ryan Guinaran as the founder and first chair of the organization. Dr. Primitivo Remando facilitated the ratification of the constitution on March 3, 2003. Through the years, RSO has grown as an organization. In the year 2011, RSO celebrates its 10th year, relentlessly committed in forming and preparing its members to become doctors for the Filipino people in the different regions. The battle cry of the RSO is '*For the Nation. Through the Regions.*'

The making of the RSO seemingly converted the RP-required 'classrooms and instructions' into 'RSO activities', making the whole program personal and joyful (mainly under the RSO Chair Jacqueline Frances F. Momville):

#### 1. Summer Immersion Program

This summer immersion is a much-awaited yearly activity of the RP students wherein they go home to their region of origin and serve a community. It gives them the opportunity to integrate and be in solidarity with the people of their home provinces by getting to know them and working with them. Aside from serving their community, they get to appreciate and enjoy destinations and nature tripping which only the provinces could offer. They go back to Manila bringing with them the memories and stories of an enlightening summer immersion experience.

#### 2. Immersion Integration

This provides an opportunity for RP students to share their experiences during the past summer immersion from the different regions across the Philippines. Everyone is excited and eager to hear the stories of each one on how they did

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their immersion. It is also a time to reflect upon these significant experiences of fellow RP students and thereby learn from them.

### 3. Immersion Workshops

A series of workshops are conducted every year to equip RSO members for their summer immersion in the provinces. These aim to instill the value of immersion in the members and impart to them the necessary skills for community immersion. It is a venue for the exchange of ideas and best practices among the members. This is where the senior members share the must-knows and must-dos for a successful summer immersion.

### 4. Gawad Serbisyong Pangrehiyon (Awards for Service to the Regions)

In support of the community-oriented medical curriculum, an award to recognize the best summer immersion program was launched in 2009. This is now known as the *Gawad Serbisyong Pangrehiyon*: UPCM 1963 Student Award for Best Summer Immersion Program. Nominated summer immersion programs are presented to the UPCM community, particularly what was done during the summer immersion, and how they were done.

### 5. Org Immersion

RSO Org Immersion is an annual joint immersion activity of all RSO members which has the goal of showing the new RSO members how an actual immersion is planned and carried out before they finally do their own summer immersions in their region of origin. Activities done during the org immersion are tailored to the needs of the chosen community. The senior members of RSO accompany the new members during the org immersion to guide them and impart their knowledge and skills in conducting an immersion. Moreover, it also aims to cultivate appreciation and love for Philippine culture, people and nature. The first org immersion was conducted with an Aeta community in Tayabas, Quezon during the summer of 2009. The second one was done during the summer of 2010 with the Igorots of Besao, Mountain Province.

### 6. Outreach Program

This is a service-learning activity done every other month to reach out to the marginalized sector of society. This outreach initiative is rooted in the desire to serve the Filipinos. It aims to deepen the value of social responsibility among the RSO members. RSO prepares various activities for the children with focus on health education and promotion. The first two outreach activities of RSO were

made possible through a partnership with the Office of the Chief Justice Reynato Puno. *Nayon ng Kabataan* (Community of the Youth) became its first outreach community from 2008-2009. *Asociacion de Damas Filipinas* (Association of Filipino Women) was the second one from 2009- 2010.

### 7. Kasadya-an (Merry-making): RSO Kick-Off Celebration

Popularly known as *Kasadya-an*, this activity welcomes the new RSO members to the UPCM-RP community. At the start of every year, the whole organization gathers in festivity and merry making to celebrate the entry of a new batch of future doctors committed to serve their regions. The new members are inducted to the RSO and, in the process, get acquainted with the other members.

### 8. Freshmen Orientation Seminar (OrSem)

The *OrSem* aims to provide a venue for the new members of RP-RSO to get to know RP and RSO in a more personal and deeper level. Group dynamics, games and creative presentations are conducted for the new members to help them get acquainted with their batch mates and the organization.

### 9. Igsuon (Sibling) Dinner

*Igsuon* in RSO lingo pertains to a buddy system within RSO wherein the freshmen are partnered with their upper batch *Ates* (big sisters) and *Kuyas* (big brothers), who will serve as their family away from home throughout their stay in the UPCM. A dinner on the first day of class is organized so that the freshmen can meet with their respective *igsuons* and get to know each other.

### 10. Mukha ng Bakasyon (The Face of Vacation) Photo Contest

Launched in 2008, *Mukha ng Bakasyon* is the only annual photo contest in the college, organized by RSO, to provide an opportunity for the medical students of UPCM to showcase the diversity of work conducted during the immersion and capture the richness of summer vacation through photographs that inspire service, nation-building and love of country.

### 11. RSO Week

Celebrated every January in commemoration of the founding of RSO in 2001, RSO week usually extends to a month-long celebration with various activities like RSO Food Fest, Jobs Fair, Exhibit, *Pinoy* (Filipino) Quiz Show, *Palarong Pinoy* (Filipino games) and RSO Party. The event plays a special role in uniting RSO members, alumni and mentors as they make each activity a reality and a success.