



On behalf of the Commission on Higher Education, I would like to congratulate and commend the University of the Philippines Manila - College of Public Health and the APACPH for the successful 53rd Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health Conference underscoring the transformative role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in delivering sustainability.

Traditionally, higher education's primary function is to disseminate knowledge through teaching and generate new knowledge through research. However, it is also the higher education sector's social responsibility to mobilize educational resources to bring about positive social and community changes.

It is with these core functions that our HEIs are great players in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

First, HEIs are mandated to instruct, train, and produce quality professionals who will fill the gaps in the human resource pool. They function to equip students with knowledge, skills, and mindset to become productive members of society. This function gives HEIs the capacity for transformative teaching and learning which makes the sector crucial in achieving sustainability.

By providing students with the competencies needed to address pressing challenges such as public health challenges, climate change, inequalities, and other societal concerns, HEIs can contribute to creating a sustainable future.

In the context of the Philippines, our HEIs are incorporating aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals in their curricula, and education programs and operations, thereby boosting students' understanding of health, environmental, and societal challenges and contributing to sustainable social growth.

This year, fifty-six (56) Philippine HEIs were recognized in the 2024 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (THE-IR) for effectively integrating SDGs into their curriculum and core mission.

The Philippines ranked among the top 10 countries with the most number of participating higher education institutions which underscores the unwavering commitment of Philippine HEIs to achieving SDGs and making a positive societal impact.

Second, HEIs are also a hub of new knowledge and innovation. Philippine universities' academic leaders and faculty members are composed of the country's best scientists, researchers, scholars, and academics. These individuals are the frontliners in the generation of knowledge and discoveries in the country, which predominantly provide evidence for informed public policy and practice.

Notably, Philippine HEIs actively carry out studies and research that are directly relevant to delivering the SDGs.

For instance, the University of the Philippines - Manila has been the country's leading health research and development institution and a crucial source of relevant, evidence-based health information for the government's health policy development, health care delivery improvement, enhancement of the knowledge and skills of health professionals, and formulation of the national health research agenda.

This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when the UP scientists and clinicians provided the government with science-informed recommendations which have helped the government make informed decisions that save countless Filipino lives during the pandemic.

Aside from UP, other Philippine state universities and colleges (SUCs) are also eagerly contributing to the pool of research targeted to the delivery and achievement of sustainability not only on health but also on other sustainability goals.

For example, the Samar State University research project titled “3D Visualization of Citywide Geohazard Mapping and Simulation of What-if Scenarios Using Geospatial Research and Data Analytics,” which topped the 2023 WURI under the Fourth Industrial Revolution category, contributes to policy-making on disaster planning and response by providing a scenario-based comprehensive plan contributing to risk reduction and creating sustainable and resilient communities.

Lastly, aside from teaching and research, it is also the HEIs core function to create meaningful impact on the community. CHED repeatedly urges our educational institutions to go out of their campus fences to extend help to their surrounding community.

HEIs have actively responded to our call, they boosted not only their academic performance but also their contributions to addressing community-specific challenges and priorities.

Mabalacat City College (MCC), for example, is recognized internationally for spearheading initiatives that foster sustainable development within its community including addressing community nutritional needs and health-related concerns through local resources, preservation of indigenous culture through digital technology, and many more.

Philippine HEIs are passionately committing to sustainability as reflected in their campus operations, curriculum, research agendas, and community engagement activities.

On the part of CHED, we will ramp up our efforts to encourage and support our HEIs in their endeavors to deliver SDGs and service to the community, particularly on health and the environment.

To create a sustainable society, we need all sectors to mobilize and collaborate to realize our sustainability goals. Together, let us provide solutions to the unique social, environmental, economic, and health challenges of our time.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay tayong lahat!

J. Prospero E. De Vera III, DPA

Chairman

Commission on Higher Education