Training in the use of tools is essential, particularly for faculty who are not “digital natives.” Miriam College has already facilitated six United Board workshops and introduced an online platform, the Asian University Digital Resource Network (link), for faculty to share ideas and resources. It’s also important “to walk our talk,” as Dr. Quisumbing-Baybay and Mr. Yuvienco put it, by actively encouraging collaboration across disciplines and promoting largely unnoticed pedagogical innovations based on local knowledge and digital tools.

Go Online
Go to unitedboard.org for more information on this initiative.

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WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU’RE NOT AT WORK? IS THERE A SIDE OF YOU BEYOND THE PROFESSIONAL ONE?

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“...The experience I gained in an American academic environment fueled my passion for teaching and research,” she said in a recent interview, “and strengthened me through the challenges I faced in the new establishment, a new workplace, a new team and of course a different culture. When I returned to WCC invigorated from 2000 to 2001. But she had begun to hone her leadership skills seven years earlier, when riding Margaret Waller as a United Board visiting scholar at Davidson College in the United States to support a Christian presence in colleges and universities in Asia.

When I returned to WCC in 2007 AULP, in terms of “responsibilities, challenges, teamwork, commitment and vision.” As important as the presentations were — on topics ranging from trends in higher education, to quality assessment, to resource generation — she also valued talking to other leaders about how they meet challenges. “AULP was an invaluable experience because it provided new insights into leadership styles. The cross-cultural experience — interacting with leaders from universities across Asia — was truly inspiring and motivating.”

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“When I returned to WCC from my United Board experiences, “I’m nurturing leadership among my colleagues,” she said, “and my focus is on capacity building and inspiring team spirit among them. I’ve learned to be more structured, systematic and disciplined, which I observed in United Board programs.” She finds even greater inspiration in her Christian faith. “I consider leadership a ‘calling.’ In my case, it was with a purpose — to serve a diverse college community unconditionally."

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Dr. QUISINGUMBING-BAYBAY says, “...Globalization may bring about the homogenization of culture and national identity,” says Dr. Quisingumbing-Baybay. “We see this among our students who increasingly are exposed to dominant cultures through the Internet.” Mr. Yuvencio points out that the power and popularity of digital tools add to this trend. “As digital tools become easier to use, content production that references the present context — ‘What is on your mind?’ — may tend to trivialize the past.”

“These projects,” Mr. Yuvencio says, "open windows into the minds of the people behind the artifacts.”

Is there a way for educators to combine the best of both worlds, using these readily available, modern tools to integrate local, traditional or overlooked resources into their teaching? That’s the starting point for the United Board’s Local Knowledge Initiative, which encourages faculty to develop courses that actively involve students in the process of collecting, organizing and analyzing information related to cultural practices, languages, music, dance, agricultural practices, social relations, livelihoods, and other forms of local knowledge. Miriam College, located in Quezon City, the Philippines, is the lead institution for the initiative.

“There’s a fundamental role for Asia’s institutions of higher education. “While we appreciate the universality of the human person in terms of values and the need for peace and understanding among different people,”

Dr. Quisingumbing-Baybay says, “...we also help ensure that the diversity and richness of cultures flourish.” For example, a conservation case study on Javaene vernacular architecture, conducted by Soegijapranata Catholic University with a grant from the United Board, will digitize existing knowledge and devise means to incorporate the resulting online archive into the university’s architectural courses. Seven other Local Knowledge Initiative projects — on topics as diverse as herbal medicines, ecotourism, and traditional lullabies — are underway in China, India, the Philippines and Vietnam. "These projects,” Mr. Yuvencio says, “open windows into the minds of the people behind the artifacts.”

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PARTNERS
Miriam College: Local Knowledge in a Globalized Age

EDUCATORS IN ASIA SEE THAT GLOBALIZATION OFFERS THEIR students unprecedented opportunities to acquire knowledge, communicate across borders and, ultimately, embark on 21st-century careers. Yet as Joel Yuvencio and Maria Lourdes Quisingumbing-Baybay of Miriam College point students toward the future, they also see actively promoting education that incorporates traditional practices and other forms of local knowledge.

For all the benefits of globalization, there are risks as well. "Globalization may bring about the homogenization of culture and national identity," says Dr. Quisingumbing-Baybay. "We see this among our students who increasingly are exposed to dominant cultures through the Internet." Mr. Yuvencio points out that the power and popularity of digital tools add to this trend. "As digital tools become easier to use, content production that references the present context — ‘What is on your mind?’ — may tend to trivialize the past."

Programs
AULP: Empowering New Leaders

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NEW PRESIDENT, OLD FRIEND

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WHEN BIDLING MARGARET WALLER
attended the United Board’s Asian University Leaders Program (AULP) in January 2007, she had been Principal of Women’s Christian College (WCC) in Chennai, India, for only seven months. But she had begun to hone her leadership skills seven years earlier, as a United Board visiting scholar at Davidson College in the United States from 2000 to 2001.

“The experience I gained in an American academic environment fueled my passion for teaching and research,” she said in a recent interview, “and strengthened me through the challenges I faced in a new establishment, a new workplace, a new team and of course a different culture. When I returned to WCC invigorated and with a broader perspective of education, I was identified by the then-principal for an administrative position as the dean of residents, which further empowered me for leadership.”

AULP is designed to give new and seasoned leaders of Asian colleges and universities specialized skills training, as well as an opportunity to share information with their peers. Each year, about 15 presidents, vice presidents, deans and other key administrators attend the four-day program.

Dr. Waller found common ground with the other participants at the 2007 AULP, in terms of “responsibilities, challenges, lifestyle, commitment and vision.” As important as the presentations were — on topics ranging from trends in higher education, to quality assessment, to resource generation — she also valued talking to other leaders about how they meet challenges. “AULP was an invaluable experience because it provided new insights into leadership styles. The cross-cultural experience — interacting with leaders from universities across Asia — was truly inspiring and motivating.”

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“While I faced the challenges of leadership both personally and professionally, the AULP reinforced my commitment to developing leaders among my colleagues, and equipped me with the skills and knowledge to do so more effectively.”

Is there a way for educators to combine the best of both worlds, using these readily available, modern tools to integrate local, traditional or overlooked resources into their teaching? That’s the starting point for the United Board’s Local Knowledge Initiative, which encourages faculty to develop courses that actively involve students in the process of collecting, organizing and analyzing information related to cultural practices, languages, music, dance, agricultural practices, social relations, livelihoods, and other local forms of knowledge. Miriam College, located in Quezon City, the Philippines, is the lead institution for the initiative.

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NEW PRESIDENT, OLD FRIEND

Dr. Nancy E. Chapman became President of the United Board on January 3, 2011. Though new to the position of President, she has a long-standing relationship with the United Board, which she discusses in this interview.

WHEN AND HOW DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT THE UNITED BOARD?

Early in my career, I worked with several U.S. organizations engaged in educational exchange work with China. There were not very many American organizations working with China in those days, but the United Board was one, so I got to know some of its staff then.

YOU HAD BEEN A TRUSTEE OF THE UNITED BOARD SINCE 2003. WHAT MADE YOU SEEK THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT?

From my earliest days on the board of trustees, I have been struck by the deep sense of partnership and shared purpose that pervades the organization and characterizes our relationships with our partners throughout Asia. It’s extraordinary — whenever I meet a scholar or university administrator who has worked with the United Board or participated in one of our programs, I sense the high esteem in which the United Board is held throughout the region, as well as the affection that people feel for our organization. This reflects, I think, the thoughtfulness and dedication of our staff and trustees, along with that of our predecessors over the years. So, the opportunity to build on this foundation is very appealing.

I also felt that my professional background and what I had learned from my service on the board had prepared me to make a contribution to the United Board’s work. I have spent my entire career working in or with Asian institutions of higher education, and I also have experience in the field of philanthropy.

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And perhaps most fundamentally, the faith and values that undergird the United Board’s work are ones that I share and that resonate with my personal history, since a number of my forebears were missionary educators in Sri Lanka and South Africa.

HOW IS THE UNITED BOARD’S MISSION OF SUPPORTING CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA BEST PUT INTO ACTION?

With flexibility, great sensitivity and discernment. There is such diversity of all kinds throughout Asia — diversity of resources, of needs, of culture, and of approaches to education. Fortunately, the United Board has a very inclusive understanding of Christian presence that can accommodate a broad range of educational endeavors.

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