

UNITED BOARD

# HORIZONS

JUNE 2021

UNITED BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA



## Aiming High for Whole Person Leadership

**Leadership and Faculty Development:  
*Strengthening the Foundation of Whole Person Education***

**Also in this issue:  
*An Update on Our Pandemic Response Fund***

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# Message from the President

## Investing in the “Next Normal”

The “new normal” has been a near-constant topic of conversation for the past year, as COVID-19 reshaped virtually every aspect of our daily lives. Now, after a year of creative response and adaptation, educators in the United Board network are starting to think about the “next normal.” What innovations from the past year will they carry forward? How will they combine the best aspects of in-person and online teaching and learning? We are just starting to sense the ways in which Asian higher education will be permanently transformed.

My United Board colleagues are having similar conversations. Over the course of a challenging year, our program staff has succeeded in expanding the reach of our programs. Our “Leading Through Crisis” webinar series is one example: nearly 800 people attended at least one webinar in the series, more than we ever could expect to accommodate at an in-person event. We’ve learned how to bring both substance and a personal touch to our webinars, and we’ve renewed connections with program alumni through virtual reunions. Our experiments with new formats for programming give us insights to help us design our own “next normal.”

In some respects, the United Board has always been an investor in the “next normal.” For nearly 100 years we’ve invested in the talent and ideas of Asian leaders and faculty who embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Our confidence in these educators is so strong that we’ve made Leadership Development and Faculty Development two of the pillars of our Centennial Fund. This issue of *Horizons* puts the spotlight on these two areas of programming, and I think you will be inspired by the ways in which the educators we’ve profiled are responding to the moment and dreaming big about the future.

I invite you to join us in supporting the educators who will design and implement the “next normal.” I know my colleague Trudy Loo (tel. 1.212.870.2612, [tloo@unitedboard.org](mailto:tloo@unitedboard.org)) will be happy to share with you our plans for the Centennial Fund. Thank you, as always, for your support of our mission.



Nancy E. Chapman  
President

## Contents

<b>Message from the President</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Reaching the Minds of Students</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Network News</b>	<b>3</b>	Jasmine J., St. Christopher’s College of Education	
<b>Investing in Leadership Development</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>“Aha!” Moments in Teaching and Learning</b>	<b>11</b>
An Interview with Vivica Xiong		Omur Elci, Asian University for Women	
<b>Defining the Mission</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Building a Sense of Solidarity</b>	<b>12</b>
Michael Ratnapalan, Yonsei University		Monica Madyaningrum, Sanata Dharma University	
<b>Setting High Expectations for Leadership</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Promoting a Peaceful Campus Community</b>	<b>13</b>
Ngo Thi Phuong Lan, USSH – VNU – Ho Chi Minh City		Alma Ruiz, Silliman University	
<b>The Need for Emotional and Spiritual Well-being</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Connecting Mathematics to Peace</b>	<b>14</b>
Fr. Tomy Augustine Kumplankal, Salesian College		Joel Arenas, Mindanao State University	
<b>Resilience and Empathy in the COVID Era</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>An Alumnae Network, An Extended Family</b>	<b>15</b>
Meas Nearyroth, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia		Ai-lien Ong	
<b>Giving Young Women a Voice</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Inviting Students and Faculty to Come In</b>	<b>16</b>
Mayumi Karasawa, Tokyo Woman’s Christian University		David Clotfelter, Tunghai University	

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# Network News

## Appreciation to Host Institutions

Over the past five years, 55 institutions have graciously hosted United Board programs. They welcomed our Faculty Scholars and United Board Fellows, and they have provided venues, staff support, and hospitality for United Board conferences, workshops, and seminars.

These generous contributions help to broaden and deepen our engagement with educators across Asia. We express our warm appreciation for their support of the United Board's work and for the hospitality they extend to our program participants.



Sanata Dharma University hosted the Whole Person Education Academy Harvest Seminar in 2019.



## Pandemic Response Fund: An Update

Launched in September 2020, the United Board's Pandemic Response Fund provided 43 Asian higher education institutions with grant support to help them continue delivering quality education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, the United Board awarded over \$1 million for two categories of support: general operating support for immediate needs brought on by the pandemic and for immediate needs related to a transition to online learning, including for training, equipment, and software.

The grants were received with gratitude. A representative of one recipient university wrote, "We believe that the funding will enable us to survive through the difficult corona pandemic crisis and do more for the students in need," while another one described the United Board grant as "providing a silver lining in these challenging times."

The Pandemic Response Fund was supported by a special allocation from the United Board's endowment, approved by its Board of Trustees, as well as by gifts from generous donors. Going forward, our regular programs and grants will continue to address needs and opportunities created by the pandemic.

## Our Centennial Fund

Our Centennial Fund gives special attention to three of our strategic priorities: Leadership Development, Faculty Development, and Special Initiatives. This issue of *Horizons* includes profiles of 11 individuals who have participated in our Leadership Development and Faculty Development programs. Their stories highlight the myriad ways that Asian educators are translating the principles of whole person education into meaningful practices.

To learn more about supporting the Centennial Fund, please contact Ms. Trudy Loo, Director of Development, at 1.212.870.2612 or [tloo@unitedboard.org](mailto:tloo@unitedboard.org).



# Investing in Leadership Development

## An Interview with Vivica Xiong

“Leadership is more than a title or position.”

***Vivica Xiong is the United Board's Director, Leadership Development.***

### **What are some of your goals for leadership development programs?**

I hope to increase educators' awareness of their leadership roles and potential. Through our programs, we can enhance their skills as strategists, collaborators, communicators and storytellers, financial managers and fundraisers, and academic and intellectual leaders. In this way, we can build institutional capacity with faculty and staff who are capable of taking their college or university to the next level.

### **Where do we find leaders or potential leaders for higher education?**

Leadership is more than a title or position — you don't have to have a formal position in order to lead. My own view on leadership was transformed after my time spent at the University of California, Berkeley as a W.T. Chan Fellow. Berkeley has a community-based, grassroots approach to service, and is a pioneer in service-learning. At an orientation for students involved in their service activities, I learned that leaders can be individuals working as change-makers. That notion is important to me and influences how I design our leadership programs. I want educators to see that they are first and foremost leaders in the classroom, where they can inspire change in younger generations.

### **What is the United Board's strategy for leadership development?**

We are moving toward a more integrated approach that will provide a range of resources. Our framework is both

horizontal — working at national, regional, and Asia-wide levels — and vertical — with training for junior, midcareer, and senior leaders.

Our United Board Fellows Program shows how we translate our philosophy of whole person education into leadership development.

The Fellows Program is both informational and transformational. Informational, because leaders need continuous learning opportunities to build skills in strategic development, communications, finance, and fundraising. Transformational, because leadership begins with self-exploration. That's one reason why we use psychometric assessment in the Fellows Program — to help leaders discover who they are and what they are good at, to find their voice, and, ultimately, to become a better leader. We hope to incorporate best practices from the Fellows Program, accumulated over the past two decades, into our other leadership initiatives, so that more educators can benefit.

### **Are there other ways to promote leadership?**

There is a lack of literature and research on Asian higher education leadership. So one of our goals is to establish leadership hubs in Asia that can develop scholarship on Asian higher education leadership. These hubs could do this through expanding their research capacity, developing local talents through leadership training, and creating a framework for Asian leadership development.

The United Board has done some unique work in leadership development, and our network institutions have much to offer. It's time to work more closely with our network institutions and to consolidate, leverage, and share these resources so that we can better train the next wave of leaders.



Vivica Xiong

## Centennial Support

Our Centennial Fund gives special attention to Leadership Development, recognizing the special role that visionary leaders play in building support for whole person education; stewarding human, financial, and physical resources; and creating a caring campus environment.



# Defining the Mission

## Michael Ratnapalan, Yonsei University

“I was intrigued by the idea of teaching a liberal arts curriculum.”

Michael Ratnapalan joined the faculty of Yonsei University's Underwood International College (UIC) in 2012 because, he explains, “I was intrigued by the idea of teaching a liberal arts curriculum at Yonsei University, a well-established, private Korean university.” UIC offers Korean and international students an English-language liberal arts education that emphasizes creative and critical thinking, democratic citizenship, and global leadership. Trained as a historian in the United Kingdom, Dr. Ratnapalan sees the core intellectual value of a liberal arts college as being the ability to read texts carefully and critically. But, he adds, “I also follow the English clergyman and writer John Henry Newman in holding that the purpose of a liberal education is not simply to offer something objectively ‘useful’ but rather to build a person up intellectually and morally.”

A liberal arts education also can help students become more aware of the needs of others and the potential for social change. “Korean students are well known for their active engagement in movements for social justice, and historically, at Yonsei, our students have made great sacrifices and contributions in aid of the common good,” Dr. Ratnapalan said. “One of our most pressing tasks today is to retrieve this moral conscience and sense of social responsibility in an increasingly individualistic and materialistic society.” At the same time, Korean universities are striving to conform to international professional standards, establish transparency and accountability in governance, and create a system that is equitable for everyone.

The 2019-2020 United Board Fellows Program gave Dr. Ratnapalan opportunities for deep thinking about those concerns. It also brought to the surface some challenging questions about UIC's mission and its position within Yonsei. Should UIC and Yonsei simply coexist, and respectfully follow separate paths of development? Or should each integrate the other into its life and activities, and bring new meaning to the goal of global leadership? He found inspiration at the program's Summer Institute, particularly in the reflections of Father Dennis Holtschneider, former president of DePaul University, and during a visit to Stonehill College. “These offered powerful, living witnesses of the importance of implementing a clear, relevant, and practical religious mission developed in dialogue with key stakeholders across all levels of the university,” Dr. Ratnapalan said.

A spirit of camaraderie among the Fellows in his cohort — drawn from 14 Asian colleges and universities — created an excellent environment to explore the meaning of mission. “Our conversations at the Summer Institute

were lively and I gained a lot from listening to others talking about ‘big picture’ issues, such as whole person education and the role of the university in society,” he recalled. Those discussions set a foundation for further reflection and, ultimately, action. “My experience with the United Board has helped me to understand the importance of defining an institution's mission, and I hope to work with my colleagues to make a positive impact at UIC.”



Michael Ratnapalan  
2019-2020 Fellow



Dr. Ratnapalan, far right, with other Fellows at the 2019 Summer Institute. The Summer Institute was held at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; Dr. Joseph Zolner (center, in crimson robe) served as the program director.



# Setting High Expectations for Leadership

## Ngo Thi Phuong Lan, USSH – VNU – Ho Chi Minh City

“A leader possesses a devoted attitude.”



Ngo Thi Phuong Lan  
2017-2018 Freeman Fellow

In 2018, Ngo Thi Phuong Lan was named the first female president of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH), Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City. She brings high expectations to her leadership role: “A leader always puts the good of the whole above the good of the individual; has the

utmost spirit of responsibility when performing any task; and possesses a devoted attitude, always promoting the spirit of service in every activity of the institution.” Her description reflects both the 24/7 nature of her position and her sense that a university president should be a model for students, faculty, and staff.

Dr. Ngo had not yet been named USSH president when she and 20 other Asian educators participated in the 2017-2018 United Board Fellows Program. The program’s Summer Institute introduced them to the “four frames of leadership” — structural, human resources, political, and symbolic — as a key to understanding leadership styles and exploring their responses to challenges. Short-term placements gave Fellows an opportunity to compare their institutions’ management practices to those of other Asian colleges and universities. These experiences, from the United Board’s perspective, help build a community of leaders for whole person education.

Whole person education, Dr. Ngo points out, is already part of the fabric of USSH. The university’s core values are “creativity — leadership — responsibility” and its educational philosophy is “whole person — liberal — multicultural.” Translating those goals into action requires attention to curriculum design, pedagogical practices, assessment and evaluation, technology in education, quality assurance, and students’ extracurricular activities. From Dr. Ngo’s point of view, that requires a leader who combines both “we” skills — someone who invites the participation of stakeholders — and “I” skills — someone who is willing to make difficult decisions and be held accountable for them.

Inspired in part by her experience in the United Board Fellows Program, Dr. Ngo has been energetic in expanding USSH’s community of stakeholders to include alumni and businesses. Alumni Liaison Boards at the university, faculty, and departmental levels host activities to promote bonds among alumni and connect them to developments at the university. Businesses are encouraged to be collaborative partners by providing student scholarships or employment opportunities for graduates. These relationships, Dr. Ngo finds, are about much more than financial support: “Most importantly, they provide invaluable emotional support for the continued growth of this institution.”



Dr. Ngo (center, in pink dress) with faculty at a women’s leadership event.



# The Need for Emotional and Spiritual Well-being

## Fr. Tomy Augustine Kumplankal, Salesian College

“A leader in higher education needs to be a ‘whole person.’”



Father Tomy Augustine

Father Tomy Augustine Kumplankal, the rector of Salesian College in Sonada, Darjeeling, India, highlights five qualities he considers most important for higher education leaders: emotional and spiritual well-being, personal integrity, the capacity to adapt and change, the ability to lead with head and heart, and the ability to synergize. Leading Salesian College during the pandemic has required him to lean on all five of those qualities. COVID-19 forced Salesian College to shut down abruptly, creating anxiety among both staff and students. “They were anxious about completing the syllabus and having the examinations on time,” Father Tomy reported. “Social distancing was imposed and movements were restricted, and as a result, campus life and activity came to a halt.” That left members of the campus community feeling disconnected from friends and lonely.

Adaptation began immediately. “We had a weekly online survey to assess the impact of lockdown on students and faculty,” Father Tomy said. “Within a week our tech team put in place an online Moodle platform for classes, webinars, and assessments.” Those steps helped to restore the bond between students and the faculty. And, with the benefit of hindsight, Father Tomy sees how the challenge of responding to COVID-19 created a new learning opportunity. “Students and faculty became well versed in the use of online platforms and explored e-resources for learning and imparting knowledge.”

Responding to the pandemic, however, often placed tremendous pressure on college and university leaders. The United Board’s five-part webinar series, “Leading Through Crisis,” highlighted some ways that leaders can manage the strain. “I deeply appreciate some of the insights shared in the webinars,” Father Tomy said. “The need for the emotional and spiritual well-being of the leader, and the truths and myths (personal competing beliefs) about leadership were eye-opening insights.” Listening to webinar speakers describe the hurdles they encountered and the ways in which they cultivated resiliency resonated with him.

Father Tomy was a 2012-2014 United Board Fellow, and he credits that experience with broadening his understanding of leadership and management, organizational structure, instructional strategies, and campus life. The recent webinar discussions helped connect the value of those skills with the importance of personal and spiritual development. “It struck me that a leader in higher education needs to be a ‘whole person’ before he can lead his colleagues and students,” Father Tomy said. “Other insights I liked most were about the capacity for change, flexibility, and transformation as well as the spirituality of compassion to students and involvement in society as an integral part of higher education.”



The Salesian College campus, in the foothills of the Himalayas.



# Resilience and Empathy in the COVID Era

## Meas Nearyroth, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia

“Faculty have to be invited to share their problems.”

“As a teacher and a leader, I remind myself that the product of a university is the transfer of knowledge to others,” Meas Nearyroth, an assistant dean and lecturer of education at Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia, reflected in a recent interview. That responsibility has grown heavier over the past year, as COVID-19 forced a fast transfer to online learning and brought economic hardship to many faculty members and students. “COVID-19 has taught us that anything can happen at any time,” Ms. Meas said, and it has shown her that leaders need to be resilient as they help colleagues adapt to new circumstances.

Ms. Meas found the United Board’s five-part webinar series “Leading Through Crisis” to be a source of encouragement. “The webinars came at the right time,” she said, noting that the sessions led by Father Ben Nebres, former president of Ateneo de Manila University, and Joseph Zolner, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, were especially helpful. “Father Ben reminded us to take care of ourselves, so that we can help others” she recalled. “It’s so easy to forget to care for ourselves, but we must find space for ourselves, talk with colleagues we trust, and share with each other.”

Dr. Zolner talked about leading from the “head” — planning, reviewing data, revising budgets — and the “heart” — focusing on interpersonal relationships, helping



Meas Nearyroth

each other. Ms. Meas examined these ideas through the lens of Cambodian culture. “Professors may need a lot of support but do not ask for it,” she explained, “because the tendency in Cambodian culture is to be silent and not complain.” For example, she knew that many faculty members were struggling to use technology for online teaching but were reluctant to ask for help. In this context, leading from the heart starts with small steps. “Faculty have to be invited to share their problems,” she said, “so when I greet them, I ask how they are, what is going on with them, and if help is needed.”

Comfortable with her own use of technology, Ms. Meas willingly shares her skills with others. An alumna of the United Board’s Whole Person Education Academy, she led echo training sessions in Cambodia on incorporating technology into whole person education. As a supervisor for the project CONTESSA: Contemporary Teaching Skills in South Asia, funded by EU Erasmus+, she is piloting modules for online education. She knows it is difficult, in the COVID era, to ask colleagues to try a new approach to teaching or to invest time in career advancement and networking. Still, it is a time when the values of whole person education — such as empathy, compassion, and trust in others — can shine through, as educators lead from the head and heart, keep students at the center of their teaching, and tend to the emotional well-being of themselves and others.



Ms. Meas (second from left) at the Whole Person Education Harvest Seminar.



# Giving Young Women a Voice

## Mayumi Karasawa, Tokyo Woman's Christian University

“Progress has been made but is not yet finished.”



Mayumi Karasawa

What role should a women's university play in twenty-first century Asia? Mayumi Karasawa, a professor of comparative psychology at Tokyo Woman's Christian University, provides a clear response. "Giving women a voice can be the greatest contribution of a women's university," she said in a recent interview. In Japan

and other Asian societies, the invisible values of culture — which may implicitly or explicitly favor men and boys or give preference to seniority — can make it hard for women to find their voices and take their place on a path to leadership in their chosen professions. "Progress has been made but is not yet finished," she contends. "We still need to encourage women's voices in a university setting."

Dr. Karasawa's research in the field of culture and the self has shaped her understanding of the nature of leadership. "Eastern culture values interdependence," she explained, "so in Japan, the goal of the leader is to make the group more harmonious." But that doesn't mean a leader should be silent. "Interdependence means concern for others," she said, "and if that is your goal, you have to be brave enough to speak up and say what is good or bad, to give your opinion more explicitly, and to make hard decisions. If you are a good leader, you have to use your voice to say the truth." A women's university can give undergraduate students four years in which to find their voices and use them with greater confidence.

Dr. Karasawa heard a number of female higher education leaders use their voices and speak their truth at the October 23-24 Women's Leadership Forum, co-organized as a virtual symposium by Ewha Womans University and the United Board. For example, Ewha President Heisook Kim asked how a collective female consciousness, nurtured at women's universities, might shape the nature and values of technology-based societies. "Hearing her remarks made it clear that female role models are needed," observed Dr. Karasawa, who wants her students to see how female Asian leaders frame big questions and explore potential responses. "Just a ten-minute talk can impress people and encourage others."

Looking across borders — of countries and academic disciplines — also can be encouraging. "This Asia-wide program was valuable, as issues related to gender, women's universities, and women's leadership need broader discussion," Dr. Karasawa reflected. Each women's university has its own unique features, but all can recognize the importance of encouraging effective leadership. "A good leader will make more leaders," she said, "and if you have good leadership, you have a chance to dream."



Dr. Karasawa (standing, center) with her students at Tokyo Woman's Christian University chapel.



# Reaching the Minds of Students

## Jasmine J., St. Christopher's College of Education

“How can we facilitate the learning of students?”

Jasmine J. has been an assistant professor of education at St. Christopher's College of Education in India for 12 years, and she describes her teaching as a source of joy. Whether she is teaching the pedagogy of mathematics to students at St. Christopher's, or serving as a resource person at United Board faculty development workshops in South India, she maintains a singular focus on her goal: “How can we facilitate the learning of students?”

With support from the United Board, Mrs. Jasmine participated in an online short course offered by Harvard University's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning; in total, United Board support has enabled 21 educators from nine institutions to take the course. “The Harvard program was a great opportunity,” Mrs. Jasmine said. “What I found most interesting was the focus on psychology and assessment. How can we use psychology to enrich the learning experience for students?”

Her question points to a new generation of learners and the expectations they bring to the classroom. “Previously, the focus was on having teachers impart their knowledge to students,” Mrs. Jasmine explained, “but generational change means teaching styles need to change too.” Learning can't be passive, the Bok Center instructors pointed out, so teachers need to use games, small group activities, and other techniques to help students “learn by doing.” Mrs. Jasmine appreciated the focus on “backward design,” an approach in which teachers first identify learning outcomes, then develop the assessment



Mrs. Jasmine J. (right) at a faculty development workshop.

tools that will measure evidence of students' learning, and, finally, plan the learning activities and instruction. The emphasis is on the higher order learning of Bloom's taxonomy: how can the teacher and the learning activities help students to analyze, synthesize, and create?

This learner-centered approach highlights a challenge for some educators. “We have to go to the students,” Mrs. Jasmine said — and that means teachers need to get comfortable with technology. “For students, everything is oriented to technology, so without technology we cannot reach them,” she pointed out. “We need to be able to reach the minds of our students, and that means connecting with their affective domain” — their feelings, attitudes, and emotions — “in order to reach the cognitive domain.” This was true even before the pandemic and the growing emphasis on remote learning makes ease with technology even more important.

“The minds of all my students are important to me,” Mrs. Jasmine said, and through the Bok Center course and the connections she made with other educators, she gained new insights into how her students' minds work and how her teaching can bring out the best in them.

### Centennial Support

Our Centennial Fund gives special attention to Faculty Development. Faculty are in a unique position to help young adults build purposeful lives through their instruction and mentorship, their ability to connect the classroom to the community, and their modeling of ethical behavior.



# “Aha!” Moments in Teaching and Learning

## Omur Elci, Asian University for Women

“They are hungry for education.”

“Life today is a public health classroom,” Omur Elci, the associate dean for sciences at Asian University for Women (AUW), said in a recent interview. AUW’s campus has been closed during the pandemic, but the urgency of COVID-19 has kept students actively engaged in the content of Dr. Elci’s public health and epidemiology class, despite the challenges of remote learning and connectivity issues. Students are eager to discuss news stories or real-life examples they’ve seen in their own communities, and that interest opens a pathway to explore the theoretical framework of public health.

Dr. Elci initially became involved with AUW as a volunteer, and subsequently joined the faculty with the goal of building a public health program. He brings deep experience to AUW — more than 30 years of teaching, research, and field experience — and a teaching philosophy described in a single word: life. “Young brains are sharp,” he points out, “and using real-life case studies and students’ own experiences makes learning more attractive than slide presentations or textbooks.” Public health issues resonate with his AUW students. “They live public health problems but they don’t yet know the theory behind them,” he said, and so a lecture often can prompt an “aha!” moment. For example, during a recent lecture on health behavior, his students immediately related the information to the use of tobacco or alcohol or other risks they’d observed in their home settings.

Dr. Elci experienced some “aha” moments himself when he recently participated in an online course offered by Harvard University’s Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, with support from the United Board. Through the course, he was able to connect pedagogical theory with his practical experience in teaching. “The Bok Center course gave me a greater opportunity to understand problem-based learning,” he said. Inspired by that knowledge, and his interactions with other United Board-sponsored participants, he revised the syllabus for his class.

Most of all, Dr. Elci takes inspiration from his AUW students, who represent 18 countries across Asia and the Middle East and often come from communities shaped by poverty or conflict. “It brings tears to my eyes to see how dedicated they are,” he said. “They are hungry for education.”

Their dedication creates a straight line from his professional goal — “promoting the work of public health and the public health workforce” — to the mission of the university — “building women’s leadership” — with the potential to ultimately improve the health of communities in Asia and throughout the world.



Omur Elci

### Building Skills Online

As the pandemic postponed in-person gatherings, the United Board turned to online options to strengthen the pedagogical skills of Asian faculty members. We offered scholarship support for 21 educators to participate in an eight-week online certificate course offered by Harvard University’s Derek Bok Center on Teaching & Learning. The course focused on theory (how knowledge is constructed, how learning works); communication (building rapport, engaging students, feedback); planning, design, and delivery; as well as reflection.



# Building a Sense of Solidarity

## Monica Madyaningrum, Sanata Dharma University

“Life values and principles that I learned stayed with me.”



Monica Madyaningrum

“I always believe that a university is not merely a place where skills and knowledge are produced and disseminated,” Monica Madyaningrum, a member of the Faculty of Psychology at Sanata Dharma University in Indonesia, said in a recent interview.

“Recalling my own experiences

during my undergraduate years, I really valued the opportunities that I got to develop my social, moral and ethical consciousness through various academic and non-academic activities.” Her words underscore the lasting benefits of whole person education. “I might have forgotten most of the subjects I studied during my undergraduate years,” Dr. Madyaningrum said, “but the life values and principles that I learned during those years have certainly stayed with me up until now.”

Dr. Madyaningrum’s area of expertise is community psychology, which she describes as “a field that has always been interested in developing and promoting psychological theories and practices which are responsive to the needs and struggles of the oppressed and marginalised groups in our society.” It’s a receptive platform for whole person education. “Teaching community psychology has created an opportunity for me to promote a sense of solidarity through learning activities that connect students with the disadvantaged groups in our society,” she explained. “Such a connection is particularly important to foster awareness of the privileges that we have and how we might have — consciously or unconsciously — maintained our privileges at the costs of others’ suffering.”

Those are big lessons, and Dr. Madyaningrum relies upon active learning techniques to help students internalize the values and principles associated with them. She found validation for her approach — as well as ideas for improvement — in the United Board’s Whole Person Education Academy and through her participation in an online course offered by Harvard University’s Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. “Most lecturers in my university were mainly trained and prepared as researchers or experts in their discipline, and less equipped in terms of our pedagogical knowledge and skills,” she said, so these two faculty development experiences were valuable.

Universities often stress concrete, measurable, and observable indicators of students’ learning, but Dr. Madyaningrum also appreciates longer-term, qualitative indicators. “Witnessing how our alumni thrive in areas which reflect their social and ethical consciousness is a rewarding experience,” she said. “It always becomes a moment of pride when we learn that our alumni consciously chose a road less taken because they want to put into practice the ideal of fostering solidarity with the oppressed and marginalised.”



Dr. Madyaningrum (right) at the Whole Person Education Harvest Seminar.



# Promoting a Peaceful Campus Community

## Alma Ruiz, Silliman University

“Religious education is experiential learning.”



Alma Ruiz

Silliman University in the Philippines, with its diverse student body, is a natural setting for promoting respect, trust, fellowship, and collaboration among different faith groups. Alma Ruiz, an assistant professor of religion and peace studies at Silliman's Divinity School, views these efforts as an expression of the university's

commitment to the Christian faith. “We promote a peaceful community where everyone is free from prejudices and intolerance,” she said. “Religious education is experiential learning — so we encourage students to speak for their faith, as well as to visit religious places outside of their own, observe practices and rituals, and come back together and reflect and share their experiences.”

Now, through the United Board Faculty Scholarship Program, Ms. Ruiz is deepening her understanding of the sources of conflict and the means to resolve them as she pursues a PhD in peace studies at Payap University in Thailand. The program includes study of social theory, philosophy, and world religions as a foundation for fieldwork or research on conflicts, trouble spots, and methodologies for the work of transforming conflict into peace. Ms. Ruiz already sees how, over time, the field of peace studies can transform lives: “If we give greater attention to peace studies, I believe that it will help individuals develop peace-related values; gain knowledge and skills to handle conflicts, even life's personal conflicts; and affect positive change in themselves and in the workplace, wherever they may be.”

Ms. Ruiz began her PhD program during the pandemic, so she has been participating in courses virtually, from her home in the Philippines. Still, she is impressed with the ways in which faculty and students have reached out

beyond the virtual classroom to create an inclusive and welcoming environment. “Teachers keep in touch with us through emails and other online media platforms, and with my fellow PhD students, we exchange ideas and support each other by sharing supplemental reading resources,” she said. “Even the students from higher levels, whom we haven't even met face to face, are giving us some words of encouragement to go forward, and in case we need help, they are very willing to help us, the beginners.”

The Payap program's blend of academic study, thoughtful exchange, and collegial support is an example of how a university can nurture agents for peace and understanding. It also reflects Ms. Ruiz's approach to helping different faith groups find common ground. “Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk — it includes human interactions and relationships,” Ms. Ruiz believes, including the day-to-day interactions and relationships found on a university campus.

### Payap University's Institute for Religion, Culture and Peace

The primary goals of Payap University's Institute for Religion, Culture and Peace (IRCP) are to foster increased mutual appreciation and cooperation among the world's different religious communities, thus contributing to greater interreligious and intrareligious understanding, and to develop new ways to carry out peacemaking and peacebuilding activities. IRCP also supports the efforts of PhD students in Payap's Peace Studies Department to reach out to the community locally and internationally. To learn more about the Institute, visit <https://ircp.payap.ac.th/>.

The United Board is pleased to accept donations for our network institutions for designated programs such as those of the Institute. Please contact Trudy Loo at 1.212.870.2612 or [tloo@unitedboard.org](mailto:tloo@unitedboard.org) to learn more.



# Connecting Mathematics to Peace

## Joel Arenas, Mindanao State University

“Life should be a matter of helping others – that’s a constant.”



Joel Arenas during his PhD studies.

Joel Arenas was born and raised in Maguindanao province in the Philippines, and he has witnessed the province’s long struggle for lasting peace. So while his academic studies and teaching have focused on mathematics, he also has a vision of helping his province attain peace. “This made me pursue a study on peace education when I took up my master’s degree in mathematics education,” he said, which gave him innovative ideas to introduce in the classroom. The concept of integers is one example. “Integers are defined as whole-valued positive or negative numbers or zero, and I link this definition to the human behavior of responding to positive and negative circumstances,” he explained. “Sometimes when we encounter two opposing or conflicting groups, it is better not to take sides – instead, we need to be an agent of peace between the two.”

Dr. Arenas recently earned his PhD in mathematics education at the Education University of Hong Kong, with the support of the United Board’s Faculty Scholarship Program and the Philippines’ Commission on Higher Education (CHED). His course of study enabled him to develop skills in quantitative and qualitative research methods, which, he said “will be useful for the rest of my career.” An elective course on research and issues in mathematics learning enabled him to pursue further study of human behavior, and his research culminated in his dissertation topic: positive education in learning and teaching mathematics.

“Positive education involves the study of happiness and well-being to inspire students, teachers, schools, and societies to better develop and flourish,” he said. “It helps students have a more positive outlook about their existence and, through their participation in class, they can reduce their anxiety.” That kind of caring approach is especially valuable in Maguindanao. “There is a high level of anxiety among Mindanao State University students,” he said. “Most of them come from underprivileged backgrounds, and socioeconomic struggles are a key source of this anxiety.” Math concepts can give students a way to work through their anxiety – for example, through exploring constants and variables. “Life should be a matter of helping others – that’s a constant,” he said. “The circumstances under which we live and the implications of our decisions – those are variables.”

Students are initially surprised by Dr. Arenas’ approach to teaching. “They tell me, ‘You are teaching this lesson like a father – instructing us on life and happiness,’” he said. His response reveals much about his vocation as a teacher and his commitment to whole person education. “Not everyone goes to school with a happy heart, so I want to make the classroom friendlier and show students that teachers care, that they belong in this environment, and that they are accepted.”



A positive education intervention at Maguindanao National High School was part of Joel Arenas’ research study.



# An Alumnae Network, An Extended Family

## Ai-lien Ong

“Ginling alumni activities were a big part of her life.”



Ai-lien and Fen Ong

Ai-lien Yuan Ong's three sons agree that the two most important things in her life were her love for her family and her dedication to Ginling College and its alumnae. She and her husband, Fen, presided over a loving, four-generation family, and while they spent their nearly 70 years of marriage in the United States, her

sense of connection to her Chinese alma mater remained constant. “She had extremely positive memories of her Ginling experience,” her son Arthur recalled, “and Ginling associations and friendships were a part of the fabric of her life.”

Mrs. Ong attended Ginling College during and after World War II, graduating in 1948. She met her future husband during her college years, and within a few years of her graduation, she joined Fen in New York, where he was a graduate student at Columbia University, and they were married. They raised their family in New York and later moved to California for their retirement years. “Growing up, we could see that Ginling alumnae activities were a big part of her life,” her son Larry said, and the three brothers remembered how she would bring them and her father to alumnae events — often the only men in “a room filled with strong women.”

Mrs. Ong leaned on Ginling alumnae during her early years in the United States. “My parents had planned to go back to China — they wanted to help rebuild China,” Arthur said, but they ultimately made a difficult decision not to return. “That’s when the network of Ginling alumnae provided support to each other,” he said. “They helped each other adjust to life in the United States and, eventually, become Americans.” And, as time went on, she and other members of the Ginling Alumnae Association of America made generous contributions, through the

United Board, to support scholarships and new buildings at their alma mater.

After Mrs. Ong passed away in August 2019, her family began a conversation with the United Board about ways to honor her memory. The family decided to establish an endowment fund to support women’s education and leadership. “The focus on women’s leadership seemed natural,” her son Lyndon said. “It was an extension or progression of her Ginling support, as the need to educate women to be leaders still exists.”

Mrs. Ong’s three sons emphasize that the endowment is, in essence, a gift from both of their parents. “One did not function without the other,” Larry said, “and in all her activities, our mother had our father’s support.” Now the support of the Ong family will take a new form, as their endowment will continue a legacy of giving young Asian women opportunities to learn, network, lead, and thrive.



An alumnae gathering at Ginling in the 1980s.

*Endowment support is one way to support the network institutions and issues that are important to you. Please contact Trudy Loo, Director of Development at 212-870-2612 or by email ([tloo@unitedboard.org](mailto:tloo@unitedboard.org)) to begin a conversation on establishing an endowment fund that will provide long-term support and enduring impact.*



# Inviting Students and Faculty to Come In

## David Clotfelter, Tunghai University

“We saw an opportunity to build something healthy.”



Lisa and David Clotfelter

During a 2017 trip to Taiwan, David Clotfelter and his wife, Lisa, decided to visit the campus of Tunghai University, where he had been an English teacher in the 1980s and his wife had been a student. That visit led to a series of conversations with Tunghai administrators and, ultimately, a question: “Why don’t you come

back?” Rev. Clotfelter and his wife accepted Tunghai’s invitation, and in September 2017 he began his work as the chaplain for the university, pastor of its church, and a member of the faculty.

“We saw an opportunity to come back and build something healthy,” Rev. Clotfelter said, explaining in an interview the decision he and his wife made. For the past three years, he has been putting energy into building up the church, restoring the campus ministry, and becoming familiar with a student population different in size, background, and outlook from his earlier years of service at Tunghai. “About 95 percent of the student population at Tunghai is not Christian, so they have no expectation of what the chaplain’s office can do,” he said. “We have to overcome those feelings and invite them in.”

One example of outreach to students is “Studio Thrive,” a Tuesday evening gathering that features an invited speaker followed by small group discussions. The topics are designed to appeal to students, especially freshmen: how to get along with your roommate, how to get along with the opposite sex, mobile phone usage, and other subjects. A recent session attracted 260 students.

Similarly, when teaching Christian world view and Christian ethics classes, Rev. Clotfelter highlights issues that will resonate with his students. “Ethical issues are of interest to all,” he said, and examining ethics through the lens of the environment, capital punishment, bioethics, or marriage makes them more tangible to young adults.

Rev. Clotfelter also wants to explore ways for the chaplain’s office to serve the needs of faculty. “Many faculty members are new PhDs, who do not have much teaching experience,” he said. “Is there a way for the chaplain’s office to encourage more experienced teachers to help them?”

As chaplain, Rev. Clotfelter often is asked to offer a prayer at campus events. This gives him the opportunity to connect with people of faith and, at the same time, find common ground with non-Christians. “We are created in God’s image,” he said, “and that gives us our mandate to create culture, to take care of our physical health, to seek and share education, and to be stewards of the world.” For this, he adds, we need to acquire knowledge — a meaningful goal for all who are part of the campus community.



“Studio Thrive” meets in the Luce Chapel at Tunghai University.