Velasco appointed anew as CDC Dean

Dr. Ma. Theresa H. Velasco was officially appointed as the dean of the College of Development Communication (CDC) by the UP Board of Regents in its 1309th Meeting last July 22. Velasco’s appointment is effective on June 16, 2015 until June 15, 2018. Velasco, who is serving her second term, was uncontested for the deanship.

Key Accomplishments
During the selection process, Dean Velasco presented the highlights of her term as dean and the proposed plans for the next three years.

One of the major highlights of Dean Velasco’s term was the implementation of the BSDC Generalist Curriculum. Under this new curriculum, eight new courses were developed, enabling the students to be well-rounded DevCom practitioners. Revisions were also done in the master’s and PhD programs in development communication.

Dean Velasco further discussed key successes in CDC’s research and extension projects. She emphasized the production of DDBT’s Dito sa Laguna,

UPLB Class Valedictorian hails from CDC

Paoloregel B. Samonte, who earned a general weighted average (GWA) of 1.25, led UPLB’s 2015 Graduating Class as valedictorian—a first in the history of CDC—during the Commencement Exercises on July 4.

A Recognition and Testimonial program hosted by the College of Development Communication was also held last July 3 at the Umali Auditorium, SEARCA in honor of Samonte, who graduated magna cum laude; two other magna cum laude graduates; 14 cum laude graduates; and the CDC Class of 2015. Graduating students in the master’s and PhD degree programs in development communication were recognized as well.

The CDC Class of 2015 comprised of 142 students in the bachelor of science degree (summer 2014/Midyear Term 2014, 1st and 2nd semester 2014-2015), five in the master of science degree, and three in the doctorate degree in development communication.

The following is the complete list of awardees from the Bachelor of Science in Development Communication:

**Cum Laude:**
1. Khristina Alodia N. Tolentino
2. Gil M. Suazo
3. Jeyneth Ann R. Mariano
4. James Israel M. Alim
5. Mungunkhishig Batbaatar
6. Danielle C. Buenaventura
7. Renz Homer E. Cerillo
8. Philinne Adrienne Alip
9. Karina Mao-Len S. Bundac
10. Elijah Jesse M. Pine
11. Earl Gio N. Manuel
12. Roman A. Moreno
13. Gelen Emil B. Turano
14. Mary Rose B. Manlangit

**Magna cum Laude:**
1. Clinton C. Ronquillo
2. Joy Dianne J. Gumatay
3. Paoloregel B. Samonte
When I received the invitation to speak to you today, I thought to myself “What am I going to say?” In the past years, I had been used to document- ing the stories of others but I have not really stopped and asked “What is my story?”

Very few people know instinctively what they want to do with their life. I was not one of them. Ten years ago. I was like you, a young beaming graduate excited about the real world. I thought I had it all figured out.

**Fresh from the university**

Knowing that the competition will be intense, I started applying for jobs four months before graduation. I set clear cut criteria, the sectors or areas I want to be in and how much it will pay. I was interested then in information technology, public relations and corporate communications. Since I placed a high premium on my UP education, I decided that the minimum salary that I would accept was 15,000 pesos.

By March, I’ve accepted an attractive job offer from an IT company as a technical writer. Because I felt that time was moving too quickly, I did not take time to think and jumped on it right away.

Signing your first offer is a milestone but it is only the beginning of a long journey.

Research says that on the average, we will be occupied with work for more than 90,000 hours over our lifetime. And so, it is important that those 90,000 hours are well worth it.

While I was successful in getting my first job, the days that followed proved to be difficult. I was good with what I was set out to do, writing about malware (Trojans, backdoors, viruses, etc). I knew that my work improves computer security, protecting important data of individuals and organisations across the globe. But I felt incomplete and I questioned whether I was making best use of my skills.

**Finding my purpose**

At that point, I became afflicted by a disease: the jobhopper syndrome. I spent my first 4,000 hours of work moving from one job to another. In those two years, I had been in five jobs trying relentlessly to find my purpose.

One stint stood out from the rest – when I was communications coordinator in a USAID-funded project on Energy and Clean Air. There, I started documenting human impact stories and running advocacy campaigns. I talked to jeepney drivers, high school students, companies and local government officials. I saw how people’s lives were changed through capacity-building, partnerships and enhanced policies. It was at that point that development communication ceased to become a mere concept. I was breathing it to life.

There I gained clarity of purpose. I knew I had to be in the development sector.

**Development work**

At 23, I was led back to Los Banos. To this exact place, SEAMEO SEARCA. While at SEARCA, I was fortunate to have worked under Dr. Arsenio Balisacan whose strong development orientation has inspired me. As the center’s PR specialist, I wrote about the work that SEARCA does in its core areas of graduate scholarship, research, knowledge management and consulting. In my time here, I helped professionalise the newsletter and the annual report, ensuring consistent branding.

When I arrived at SEARCA, the newsletter was designed in green. It looked no different from publications by other agricultural organisations whose collateral- als would be undoubtedly green. Working with a graphic designer, we brainstormed and studied how best we can reinvent the newsletter.

I remember handing out the first design study to the Director – there was an image of a huge strawberry on the front cover. He gave me that huge “what is this” look. I explained that the front image will be thematic depending on the content. I then left the document and said “tell me what you think.” Until today, that style and overall approach has remained. It is more creative, flexible and innovative.

The takeaway there is “Ideas are nice but you need to act on them. Do not be afraid to experiment.”

**Learning from mentors**

I worked under Lily Tallafer, whom I consider as my mentor. I am grateful for her steady belief in my abilities and inspiring me to move further ahead in my career.

In your own career, you will find your own mentor who will play a huge role in your career path. Be open. Allow yourself to be molded. Allow yourself to develop.

**Saving lives and livelihoods**

After completing my masters in development management at the Asian Institute of Management as an ADB scholar, I joined the United Nations World Food Programme as Institutional Partnerships Specialist for Disaster Preparedness and Response.

I pioneered the partnerships framework with academic institutions and continued on p. 3
Dr. Pamela A. Custodio and Prof. Winifredo B. Dagli of the College of Development Communication presented their papers at the 2015 International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI) held at the University of Illinois (UofI) Urbana-Champaign last May 20-23.

**Zooming in on local voices**

Entitled “Community capacities in risk and disaster assessments: authentic voice, reflexivity and socially shared inquiry”, Dr. Custodio’s study focuses on the voices of the indigenous peoples residing in small island communities that are most vulnerable to natural calamities.

Her research explores how researchers and the Tagbanwa indigenous community in Calauit island, Northern Palawan, produces notions of vulnerability and resilience minding authentic voice, researcher reflexivity and “socially shared inquiry”.

**Local research strategy**

aProf. Dagli shared his paper, “Pamamaybay: Towards an Integrative Social Inquiry in Understanding Cultural Ecological Landscapes in the Philippines”, in ICQI’s Special Interest Group on Indigenous Research of ICQI.

“Pamamaybay” refers to the local research strategy or method that Dagli has been developing since 2012 about the integrative and holistic way of understanding geographic-ecological, development, and ecological issues in Mt. Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape in the provinces of Quezon and Laguna.

“I have attempted to show that key issues in Mt. Banahaw can be problematized and analyzed in a more holistic and integrated way. This can be done through a place-based, interpretive ethnographic research that values reflexivity of the researcher and employs strategies to develop theoretical categories which are grounded in the context and intellectual traditions of the society or group we are studying”, shared Dagli. He furthered that the key themes that transpired from the study emphasize the need for future researchers to widen their gaze of the field, their notions of what or who the ‘community’ is, and to develop culturally appropriate methodologies and research strategies for understanding the holistic and integral nature of the Philippine society in various contexts and levels.

**2015 ICQI**

The 11th ICQI was attended by 2200 researchers (from 70 countries) who presented around 1,600 papers included in 350 conference panels. The theme of the 2015 congress is “Constructing a New Critical Qualitative Inquiry” which focused on themes that challenged normative, Western research methodologies and centered on issues such as the politics of evidence, right and left pole epistemologies, the meanings and uses of data, new models of science, new analytics of analysis and representation, the ethics of inquiry, public policy discourse, tenure, publishing, advocacy, partisanship, and decolonizing inquiry. (WBDagli/MRFSRolle)

Angel Flores ...

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nongovernment organisations. In the first year, I managed more than 700,000 US Dollars and nine institutional partners.

In this context, the work that development communicators do takes much relevance because it meant saving lives and livelihoods. One lapse in the project design or the communication initiatives can have lasting consequences. Because development deals with people, projects must be implemented with the highest level of competence and accuracy. Information that does not get to the community can cost a life.

The second thing to remember is opportunity cost. Do not forget that whenever you interview the stakeholders or call them for an FGD, you are pulling them away from an economic activity say, planting rice or catching fish.

One thing I have constantly seen is that stakeholders on the ground are often treated as sources of information and hardly recipients of the processed knowledge.

**Leading and paying it forward**

Today, I am the head of Contracts and Partnerships of British Council in the Philippines. British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We manage international development projects worldwide, helping to create opportunities for people and societies to achieve positive change.

As I’d always say, communications should be used, not as a spare tire but as a steering wheel.

I have seen in the past years of practice that too often development work fails because of weak communications. Errors such as poor targeting of beneficiaries may seem technical in nature but it is beyond that. Communications is often used only as a tool and not as a philosophy that runs through every aspect of the way development is tackled. That’s where we can make a difference.

**Our own Antara**

Before I close, let me share a short story: My family is among the

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settlers in Mindanao. I was born and raised in Davao, a mile more comfortable than Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sulu or Basilan. Antara, the child in conflict-affected Sulu would have a different story. Unlike my childhood, this child learned to have marathoner skills at age 5. Every time skirmishes came about, he had to walk or run kilometers to find a safe place. In place of the alarm clock, he would awake at the sound of gunfire and the screams of anger of soldiers and rebels. He hardly had time to go to school – evacuating from one place to another was all he learned all his life.

His father, a farmer, was a product of the Martial Law regime. His mother who had him at 15 tries to make ends meet by selling some locally made goodies near the highway.

In Antara’s family, only one can read and write – the luckiest to have stepped in fourth grade. His sisters would eventually get married at an early age to ease the burden from their family. And so the cycle goes.

Unlike me, unlike us, Antara sleeps every night, with real fear of what tomorrow might bring.

Antara is one of the reasons why we exist. I want you to remember him and the many others trapped in extreme poverty or helplessness as you leave the halls of the university.

Today, you will begin your own journey from the classroom to the real world. Do not be afraid of getting lost if that is the only way to be found. And remember - you do not only create narratives for development, you also shape your own. Have fun writing it! Congratulations Class 2015!

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DDJ’s Los Baños Times publication, DEC’s Adopt-a-School Program, and DSC’s Scicom Week. Under Velasco’s helm, CDC was recognized as a CHED Center of Excellence in development communication for the second time and passed the ASEAN University Network (AUN) quality assessment. CDC is the first social science program in the UP system to undergo the validation process.

2015-2018 Plans
Dean Velasco aligned her thrust with the current UPLB administration’s vision, mission, and goals: to become a globally competitive graduate and research university that contributes to national development.

As for her legacy, Dean Velasco wants to strengthen and advance the community communication track alongside science communication and educational communication as domains of development communication at CDC. (PJMEleazar/MRFSRolle)