

Paving the way for the next generation of cooperators . . .



With over 10 million active members and 18,000 operating entities in different parts of the archipelago, the cooperative movement is indeed one major potent force that helps in socio-economic transformation. And heightening the presence of the movement, especially among the youth are entities like the Philippine Cooperative Centre (PCC), the unifying and transforming voice of the movement in the country and the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), one of the pioneers of higher cooperative learning in the country.

The fast-paced socio-economic trends and the need to tap the very rich potential of the youth in order to study, appreciate and embrace the wonders that cooperativism could bring to the task of nation-building, community development and instilling the spirit of cooperativism e.g., in entrepreneurship— are

what drove PCC and PUP to renew their partnership that was inked last January 14, 2021 and presented during an online press conference last February 2, 2021.

A partnership that has been there for over three years, its renewal will put more vitality and dynamism for both PCC and PUP as they partner to promote quality cooperative education, research capability, technical assistance, and other cooperative-related services that are deemed responsive and relevant to the needs of the cooperative movement among students majoring in Bachelor of Science in Cooperatives.

According to *Dr. Hilda F. San Gabriel*, Chairperson, PUP Department of Cooperatives and Social Development, part of the responsibilities that PUP will undertake would include:

- identifying and assigning faculty-trainers and staff to provide support and assistance to the movement in the fields of research, consultations, publications, research, and extension services such as technical advisory and assistance;
- identifying and assigning student-trainees and volunteers to assist PCC in conducting activities, especially on research, organized for community cooperatives and partner agencies; and
- partnering with PCC in the deployment of Bachelor of Science in Cooperatives students under the on-the-job-training (OJT), immersion and internship programs of the institute's Department of Cooperatives and Social Development.

These classes will not be face-to-face but online, including OJT, due to the pandemic. PUP will also be that bridge between PCC and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) in other activities that include research, membership training and the development of marketing materials, among others. The students will then make mandatory reports. Once the students have completed their coop studies, there is a possibility that they can work for or get engaged in cooperatives, as the next breed of coop managers and/or leaders.

“This partnership represents a great opportunity which manifests that even amidst the pandemic, the learning process never stops. It is also the first online OJT for the movement,” proudly stressed Dr. San Gabriel.

On the other hand, PCC’s role, as detailed by its Chairperson, Dr. Garibaldi O. Leonardo, is

- to provide the necessary logistical assistance /support in implementing programs / activities such as research and exchange of information that are useful and beneficial to both parties;
- to extend and facilitate training opportunities to qualified PUP students among its affiliates in OJT,

immersion, research and internship programs, and

- to facilitate employment in coops through PCC’s endorsement or to facilitate the tapping of business opportunities that they can get in;
- to make available the information and reading materials that will aid students in their research; and
- to assist in the dissemination/networking of PUP’s programs and recommended policy measures that will benefit the coop movement as a whole.

Enthusiastically added Dr. Leonardo: *“Engaging the youth and engaging in digitization are two major imperatives not only of PCC, but the entire coop movement. There is also the need to engage the youth in cooperative undertakings in order to make cooperatives a bit younger, adding that admittedly the co-op movement is an aging population,”* to which Dr. San Gabriel agreed, adding that *“the seniors are there to inspire and provide guidance as they engage the youth,”* who’s forte is adopting and embracing digital innovations.

An old Chinese saying goes, every generation builds the road for the next. The road has been built for us to navigate. But as we navigate this road, let us nurture the next generation—as well as the succeeding ones—to build more roads and create those paths for further growth.

Timeless as it is, this saying also underscores how today’s cooperators—with their vast know-how and experience—can impart what they have acquired and fuse these with the wonders of technology that today’s youth (and their successors) have a passion for. These should continually propel the movement towards socio-economic growth for years—and even decades—to come.

