

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Michael M. Alba
President




2020 has been a most unusual year. On January 12, Taal Volcano burst in a phreatomagmatic eruption (i.e., one caused by water and magma coming into contact with each other), which discharged ashes that blanketed Calabarzon and Metro Manila and reached as far as Central Luzon and the Ilocos Region. In mid-March, the rapidly rising number of COVID-19 cases in the country caused the government to impose strict quarantine measures, particularly in the National Capital Region, that have remained in place through to this writing.

As a consequence of both events, schooling was disrupted. Classes were suspended for two weeks in FEU Cavite due to the Taal eruption, and all FEU schools had to scramble to close School Year (SY) 2019-2020 with in-school classes disallowed by quarantine rules and asynchronous, online activities being the only viable learning mode because, while the FEU schools had the information-technology infrastructure to deliver remote learning, the students had poor and unstable internet connectivity.

The irony is that the FEU Group of Schools had been doing quite well prior to the 2020 period of SY 2019-2020. The number of corporate vehicles with an education mission in the group stood at six, with the incorporations of FEU Alabang in 2013 and FEU High School in 2014, and the acquisition of Roosevelt College, Inc., in 2016.

In addition, East Asia Computer, Inc. (EACCI), had been given the dispensation to operate under a second brand – FEU Diliman – in 2018, in addition to the FEU Institute of Technology (or FEU Tech).

Strategic investments had also been made in a wide range of areas. Existing school buildings had been systematically upgraded and modernized. New ones were constructed or being constructed in the FEU Alabang campus (including the outstandingly designed Our Lady of Lourdes chapel), the Marikina and Rodriguez campuses of FEU Roosevelt, and FEU Manila (i.e., the Lerma Building).



A Netsuite-based enterprise application software for enrollment had been set in place in FEU Manila, FEU High School, and FEU Roosevelt, and was in the process of being implemented in the other schools. Canvas, a state-of-the-art learning management system, had been adopted in all schools to organize all teaching and learning activities in a common platform, and teachers had been extensively trained on its features. Not least, a substantial number of faculty members (34 in FEU Manila and 24 in FEU Tech) were supported in their graduate studies.

Perhaps more significantly, systemwide student population had registered sizable annual increases as the first cohorts of K-12 graduates started their collegiate studies: from 33,244 in SY 2017-2018 when there were no freshmen and sophomore college students because the Grade-10 completers had to detour to senior high school, enrollment had increased to 39,876 in SY 2018-2019 and 43,324 in SY 2019-2020, representing growth rates of 19.9% and 8.6%, respectively, over their previous year's levels. The upshot was that systemwide enrollment in SY 2019-2020 was at its highest level of the past nine school years.

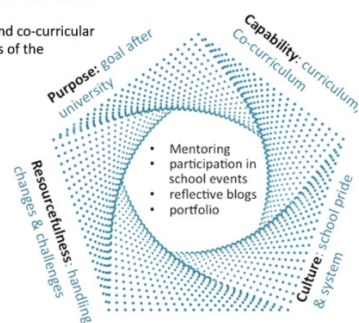
In academics, the exciting development was that the flagship campus – FEU Manila – had embarked on a transformation journey. Inspired by the insight that, for the FEU schooling experience to be distinctive and transformative, the campus environment must be nurturing and student-centric; the curricular and co-curricular programs must be holistic, immersive, and engaging; and the intended learning outcomes must not focus only on content knowledge but also foster in the students a lifelong commitment to honing their 21st-century work and life skills, the university had undertaken a massive and extensive training program for its teaching corps in a certificate course called DLECCT. The acronym for digital literacy, effective communication, and critical thinking, the DLECCT course was a semester-long crash course in which the faculty participants were fully deloaded of teaching duties. They were trained in the DLECCT skills as well as instructed on the philosophical underpinnings and practical strategies of student-centered pedagogical approaches such as the flipped classroom and blended learning. In effect, they were primed to take the leap in their teaching role from being “the sage on the stage” as is the wont in the traditional classroom to becoming “a guide on the side,” where as coaches and mentors they would give the students the leeway to take the initiative in the latter's learning journey.

Another innovation that was inspired by the same schooling-experience insight is the FEU Learning Journey (FLJ). A subject in which all students of a freshman cohort are enrolled in through their entire stay in FEU, the FLJ provides a formal structure for mentoring students to help them (a) navigate their academic lifecycle, (b) develop their inner resources to handle changes and challenges, and (c) shape their career and life goals. In large part due to the FLJ, FEU Manila was ranked 91st in the 2020 Global Top 100 Innovative Universities of the World Universities with Real Impact (WURI) and 19th in the ethical value category.

Figure 1

The FEU Learning Journey

- provides a formal structure for mentoring
- intended to help students navigate their academic lifecycle and prepare for their career and life goals
- integrates selected curricular and co-curricular activities as critical components of the students' holistic development



The Student Lifecycle Model (Lizzio & Wilson, 2010)

Yet another development still drawing on the same insight is the initiative being undertaken by the academic services (AS) offices, which include guidance and counseling, student development, student discipline, and the career and placement office, among others. To promote the development of student well-being, the AS offices are starting to take a collaborative and integrative approach in the design and implementation of their programs. By sharing data and working together, they believe that they stand to benefit from a multi-pronged, holistic perspective in their intervention programs, particularly in their handling of student discipline and misconduct cases.

All the aforementioned developments notwithstanding, the fact is that FEU is able to undertake them because it already stands on a bedrock of quality education. Indeed, FEU Manila's high standard

of quality is affirmed by its being an autonomous university since 2012, the term of which was recently extended to March 31, 2021. Moreover, its teacher-education programs in the Institute of Education (IE) are a CHED Center of Excellence, while its business administration program in the Institute of Accounts, Business, and Finance (IABF) is a CHED Center of Development.

In addition, almost all of the academic programs of FEU Manila are accredited by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). The following eight programs have PACUCOA Level IV accreditation status (the highest) until December 2020: AB Communication, B Elementary Education, B Secondary Education, BS Accountancy, BS Applied Mathematics with Information Technology, BS Biology, BS Business Administration, and BS Psychology.

Three programs have PACUCOA Level III reaccreditation status until January 2023: Doctor of Education, MA Education, and MA Psychology. BS Nursing, the only program in FEU Manila that is accredited by the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU), also enjoys Level III reaccreditation status until November 2021.

FEU Manila programs with PACUCOA Level II reaccreditation status include: AB International Studies, B Fine Arts, BS Architecture, BS Medical Technology, and BS Tourism Management; and AB Language and Literature Studies, AB Political Science, and BS Hotel and Restaurant Management. The status of the first five will hold until January 2025, while the last three will enjoy their status until May 2023.

FEU Manila has also garnered international program accreditations. It is an associate member of the International Center of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE) for the BS Tourism Management and BS Hotel and Restaurant Management programs of the Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (ITHM), and a member of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for the BS Accountancy, BS Business Administration, and M Business Administration programs of the IABF.

ITHM's BS Tourism Management program is also accredited by the Asia-Pacific Institute for Events Management (APIEM) as a Center of Excellence until February 2021.

In addition, FEU Manila is an associate member of the ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA), one of a small number of Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) to have the distinction.

For its part, FEU Tech has four programs with Level II accreditations from PAASCU: BS Computer Science with specialization in Software Engineering, BS Information Technology with specialization in Web and Mobile Application Development, BS Civil Engineering, and BS Computer Engineering. The first two programs enjoy their accreditation status until May 2021, while the last two have them until May 2024.

A second mark of quality is the licensure exam performance of FEU's graduates. In the last nine years, the passing rates of FEU Manila examinees, whether first-time takers or including retakers, tend to be above the national passing rates. But the best performing have been medical technology (Figure 2), nursing (Figure 3), and elementary- and secondary-school (Figures 4 and 5, respectively). In the figures, note the huge gaps between those of FEU examinees and the national passing rate.

Figure 2

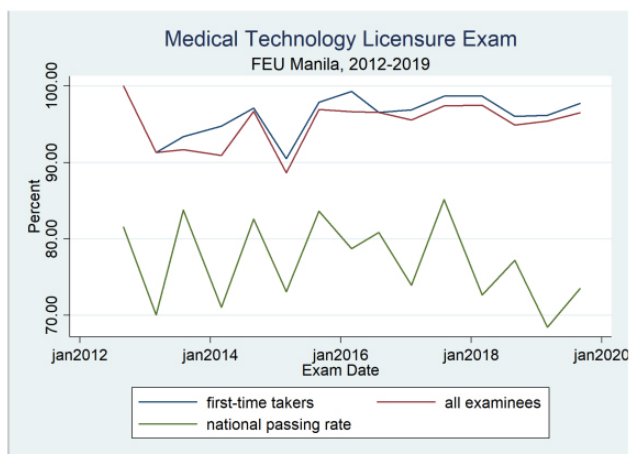


Figure 3

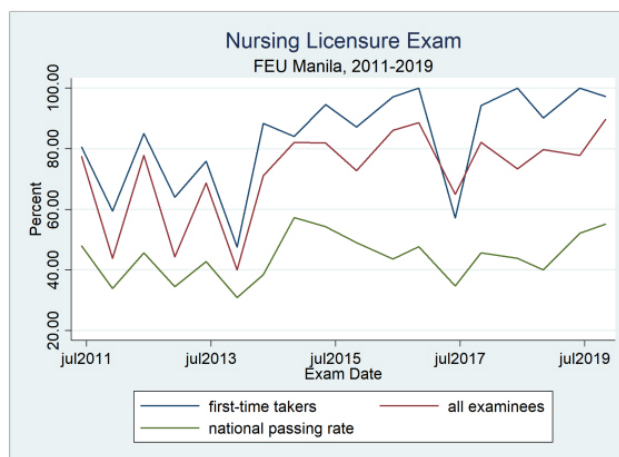


Figure 4

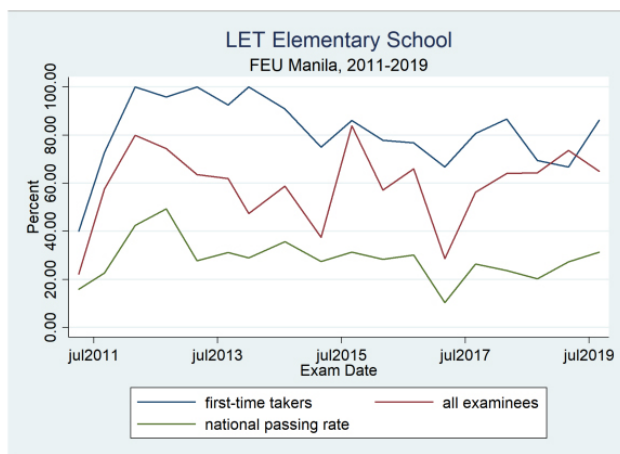
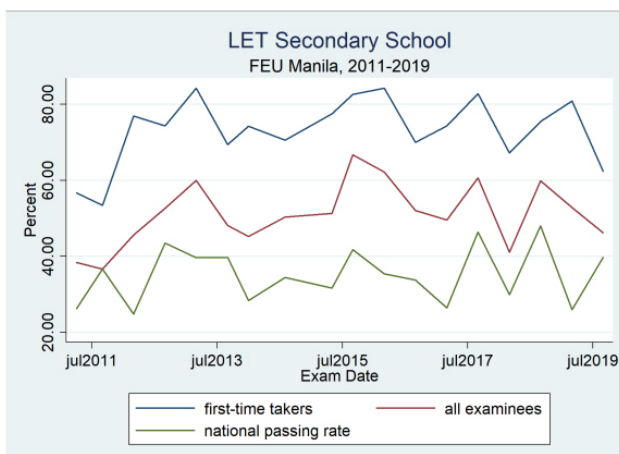


Figure 5



In the case of FEU Tech, the institute has taken measures that have apparently led to an improvement in the licensure exam performance of its graduates in civil engineering (Figure 6) and electrical engineering (Figure 7) in recent years.

Figure 6

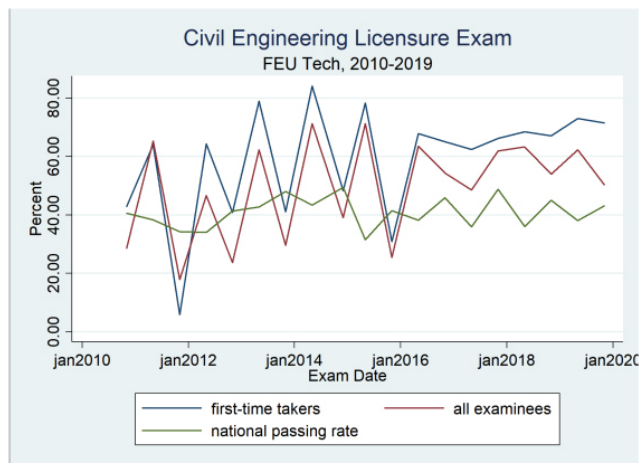
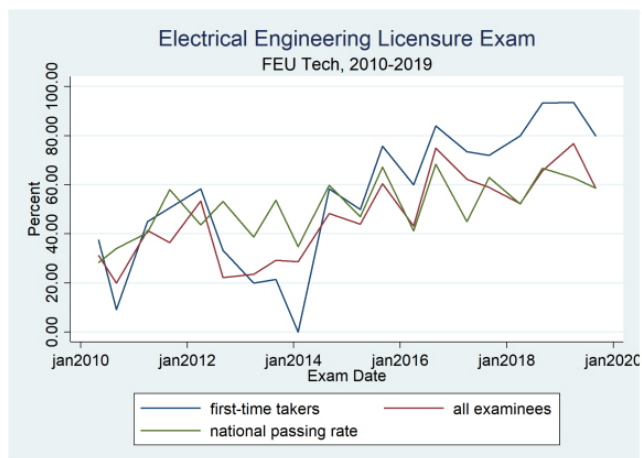



Figure 7



A third distinction of quality is the faculty's research productivity. In FEU Manila, a pleasant development in this regard is the impressive number of research publications in SY 2019-2020, which indicates that a research culture is taking root (Table 1).

Table 1
Faculty Research Publications, School Year 2019-2020

Institute	Number	ISI/SCOPUS Indexed	International Refereed	National Refereed	Book
IABF	5	3	2		
IAS	44	28	5	10	1
IE	12	5	4	2	1
IN	5	2	3		
ITHM	3		2		1
NTS	2		2		
Total	71	38	18	12	3



In the case of FEU Tech, its faculty published 27 journal articles in SY 2019-2020.

These positive developments, however, came to an abrupt stop when, as mentioned earlier, in mid-March the government suddenly imposed community quarantines in an attempt to stem the spread of COVID-19. Initially, the FEU schools shifted classes to synchronous, online sessions using Canvas and Microsoft Teams. But while the schools had the information-technology infrastructure and systems to deliver online learning, many of the students found their internet connectivity to be slow and unstable. To accommodate the students' problem, the FEU schools had to switch to asynchronous strategies, such as using the announcement and discussion board features of Canvas and assigning tasks and assessments that students could do offline.

FEU Manila opted to end the second semester of SY 2019-2020 as scheduled, on May 27. Students who completed their class requirements within the set deadlines were issued the usual letter grades. Those who didn't were given a temporary grade of IP (which stands for "in progress") and two additional months to do so. Tuition-fee refunds on laboratory and select miscellaneous fees, depending on the students' degree programs, were also credited to the students' accounts.

But in FEU Manila's Institute of Law, online classes were allowed to continue, with the faculty members given the flexibility on how best to conduct them. Final exams were held as scheduled. But the test questions were either emailed or couriered to the students who were given two days to write and submit their answers. Students who were unable to take the final exams were given the IP grade, and their law professors were instructed to give them other assignments instead.

FEU Cavite adopted FEU Manila's closure policies but ended the second semester two weeks later, having started the term later because of the Taal volcano eruption.

In the case of the EACCI-affiliated schools – FEU Tech, FEU Diliman, and FEU Alabang – the timing was more favorable. Being on a trimestral system, the schools had ended second-term classes on March 10 and were in their final-exams week when quarantine was imposed.

Final exams were cancelled, and students were graded based on the work they had completed for the term. Those who opted to write their final exams, however, were allowed to do so between May 4 and May 15.

The EACCI schools also opted to cancel the third trimester altogether and simply prepare for the August 24 start of SY 2020-2021.

Finally, in the basic education departments of FEU Diliman and FEU Alabang, classes for the fourth quarter of SY 2019-2020 were conducted using asynchronous sessions and online consultations on Canvas and Google Classroom. The deadline for the submission of all requirements was set for May 12.

The timing was also favorable for the basic education department of FEU Roosevelt. Having started the school year in June, the school had only the final exams left to be done when quarantine was declared. After consulting its constituents, FEU Roosevelt decided to close the second semester on March 13 and cancel the final exams. The students' fourth-quarter grades were then calculated based on the students' written works and performance tasks.

In the case of FEU Roosevelt's tertiary education and graduate studies departments, to complete the second semester, asynchronous, online learning sessions were conducted on Canvas until April 4. Students wrote their exams and prepared other course requirements offline. Teachers were given up to April 15 to submit the final grades.

FEU High School, which also had a June start, did not have a hard time as well. When quarantine was declared in mid-March, the Grade-12 students had one more day of final exams left to take. These were administered on Canvas, synchronously and online. In the case of the Grade -11 students, classes were done. FEU High School then opted to cancel their final exams and calculated their grades based on their class standings. Concessions were given, however, to students with failing marks; these students were allowed to voluntarily take online validation exams.

The FEU schools worked feverishly in the summer months to develop their remote delivery modes for SY 2020-2021. Table 2 enumerates the various modes each school came up with and briefly describes their features. It is too early to provide an assessment of how effective these modes are. But it is safe to say that they are probably better than those of most schools, given the training the faculty have had and their familiarity with the education-technology resources of FEU.

From the school administrators' perspective, what remains to be done, given the remote learning modalities now in play, is to strengthen the feedback mechanisms from students and the faculty. With this in mind, the FEU Group of Schools is accelerating the development of its big data and data analytics capabilities. It recently engaged Z-Lift Solutions, a data-science firm, to develop a data warehouse for its various data sets – from admissions and financial aid, the registrar, and Canvas.

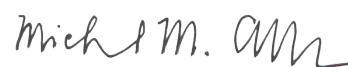
Table 2

SCHOOL	DELIVERY MODES	ASSESSMENT
<i>Higher Education</i>		
FEU Manila and Cavite	Mixed Online Learning	Assigned work and assessments will be submitted online
	Asynchronous Online Learning	Assigned work and assessments will be submitted online
	Total Analog Learning	Assigned work and assessments will be saved in USB drives and emailed to the instructor
FEU Tech, Diliman, and Alabang	Full Online Learning	Online assessment by learning module
	Blended Online Learning	Online assessment by learning module
FEU Roosevelt	Remote Learning with the Internet	Assigned work and assessments will be submitted online
	Remote Learning without the Internet (drive thru)	Assigned work and assessments will be submitted by USB drive to the school

SCHOOL	DELIVERY MODES	ASSESSMENT
FEU Cavite	Online Distance Learning	
FEU Roosevelt	Remote Online Learning	Online summative assessments
	Remote Offline Learning (Drive Thru)	Online summative assessments
FEU Diliman and Alabang	Full Online Learning	Written tasks, performance tasks, and quarterly assessments will be submitted online
	Blended Online Learning	Written tasks, performance tasks, and quarterly assessments will be submitted online
Kindergarten to Grade 10		
FEU Cavite (Pre-K to Grade 3)	Online Distance Learning	Flexible assessment depending on the readiness of the learner
FEU Cavite (Grades 4 to 10)	Online Distance Learning	Flexible assessment depending on the readiness of the learner
FEU Diliman	Full Online Learning	
FEU Roosevelt	Remote Online Learning	Online summative assessments
	Remote Offline Learning (Drive Thru)	Online summative assessments

It is the first exciting step in the development of what hopefully will eventually become a predictive-analytics ecosystem that will nudge students and the faculty to become their better selves.

To conclude: Because of its sustained drive to improve itself initiated from previous years, the FEU Group of Schools was better prepared than most schools to provide quality remote learning while the COVID pandemic is raging. The learnings at this time will only make the FEU schools even better institutions of learning post-COVID.



Michael M. Alba
 President
 October 2020
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