

# TSU cannot live alone



Tarlac State University president Dr. Myrna Q. Mallari once said during a consultative meeting with local government units held in June 2020, “We (TSU) cannot do this alone and we need your (LGUs) help to connect the dots” — a statement which unveils that whether we are in a pandemic or not, working hand-in-hand with other stakeholders or partnership, in essence, is primordial.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) earlier advised higher education institutions (HEIs) to tap the resources of LGUs to support the implementation of flexible learning while majority of the Philippine provinces are quarantined through its CHED COVID Advisory No. 7 issued in May 2020.

The month of June has been a witness to a series of consultative meetings between TSU and the local leaders of the Tarlac province. Several perspectives and viewpoints arose in the discussions — all of which are centered on facilitating the delivery of quality education now that students are advised to stay at home to avoid contracting the virus.

A vast social movement was created by TSU through these meetings. TSU formed and strengthened networks and connections to serve as a helping hand for the sake of education and youth empowerment. These partnerships have been proven useful now that the resources of TSU cannot be spread evenly all throughout the Tarlac province, and neighboring provinces, to facilitate learning.

The university has long been preparing for online education and has already been administering flexible learning, but the

other end must be prepared as well. Students must connect to the information superhighway, telecommunication companies must provide affordable Wi-Fi bundles, and the government must exhaust all means possible to make Internet connection an accessible commodity to the masses. These must address the perennial problem on the “digital divide.”

This sharing of resources, through partnerships, to address the digital divide is necessary for flexible learning amid this pandemic. With the leadership of Cong. Victor A. Yap, Tarlac 2nd District Representative, a TechnoHub for learners will be established using the strategic location of Department of Education schools, facilities and equipment of state universities in Tarlac, and resources from LGUs and the Department of Information and Communications Technology, among others. This is the end-all of the said collaborations.

To teach effectively is good, but to commit to the delivery of quality education — under normal or “new normal” situations — is better. Since time immemorial, TSU has always gone after the “better” option for its students and personnel guided by strengthened connections and partnerships.

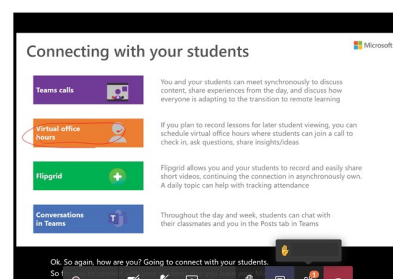
From the firsthand understanding of issues and concerns of students and the teaching workforce to how the government can move to address these issues, we can say that TSU picked the best option to co-exist with the community — and this is one of its stellar actions in dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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# TSU rallies support from LGUs for students' internet connection



In line with the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) advisory on using the flexible learning method in lieu of face-to-face classes, Tarlac State University sought the help of local government units in Tarlac through a series of consultative meetings.

Said meetings were held on June 9, 11, and 16 with the first, second, and third congressional districts of Tarlac, respectively.

TSU President Dr. Myrna Q. Mallari presented the university's and students' concerns on Internet connectivity, highlighting that TSU needs the help of LGUs as it “cannot live alone.”

LGUs' participation in flexible learning is through the provision of Internet connection in their municipality, either via a computer laboratory or a Wi-Fi area such as a gymnasium or basketball court.

“Hindi lang po ito for Tarlac State University, para din ito sa Tarlac Agricultural University at sa DepEd. Sa DepEd marami din sila, so kapagnagsabay-sabay ang paggamit, kumusta rin naman po kaya yung connectivity?” President Mallari said.

Meanwhile, LGUs were also tapped

to aid in the distribution of printed modules to students in their municipality. However, even with the modules, students still need to submit requirements and perform online quizzes and activities.

TSU has been using Microsoft Teams since 2017 where faculty members can hold classes online. With this, the university was tapped by the Commission on Higher Education Region III (CHEDRO) to lead its higher education institutions in using Microsoft Teams as a learning platform.

TSU is set to open the 1st semester of the academic year 2020-2021 on August 10.

## LGUs' RESPONSE

As shared by Pres. Mallari during the consultative meeting with the first district, the first chief executive to show her support in flexible learning is Mayor Lita Aquino of Moncada who phoned her immediately after receiving the letter of invitation from the university.

For the second district, Tarlac City mayor Maria Cristina Angeles said they will be using the Smart Infocast to send public advisories as well as announcements. This will also be used to inform students on how the printed modules will be delivered to students.

“Actually, ni-link na natin ang Smart

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with the DepEd; sa city government din meron na, ico-connect na rin natin sila sa mga private schools. Sa ngayon, nagpapagawa pa kami ng letter para makapag-text blast din sa TSU,” Angeles said in an interview.

Tarlac City government has around 500 scholars where the grantees receive 4,000 to 8,000 pesos per semester. Now that face-to-face classes were suspended, Angeles is planning to use the scholarship grants to buy gadgets for the scholars.

Currently, Tarlac City has an e-Library with 10 computer units, but these are not enough to cater to the students’ needs. Angeles said she will meet the other city officials to address this immediate need.

She further said that the Tarlac City LGU is willing to provide and support the students’ needs as they enter the “new normal” scheme.

Meanwhile, for the third district, Concepcion town mayor Andres Lacson raised his plans on converting the Lapus Sports Complex, Matrimonial Hall, and Sesssion Hall into “digital classrooms” intended for students who are about to undergo flexible learning.

The municipality will provide a large screen, laptop units, and headset so students can focus and “will not be bothered by the noise of the vehicles.” He said they will also put Wi-Fi connections in their basketball courts.

Capas town mayor Reynaldo Catacutan also said that they will use their basketball courts and gymnasiums as Wi-Fi areas for students which is in partnership with Converge.

#### SUPPORT FROM TARLAC CONGRESSMEN AND PROVINCIAL BOARD

As a form of support, Tarlac second district representative Cong. Victor Yap said that a shared infrastructure for municipalities from the government must be built to boost Internet connectivity in several areas which will be helpful to students. Cong. Yap is presently the chairperson of the House Committee on Information and Communications Technology.

On the other hand, Cong. Noel Villanueva of the third district asked the LGUs to explore the possibility of using the special education fund, 20% economic development fund, and other possible budget sources for the education sector with the guidance of the Department of Budget and Management and the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Pres. Mallari also suggested to Cong. Villanueva to convert scholarship grants of the students into gadgets like laptops or tablets which will be useful to students for online classes.

For the Provincial Board, second district board member Dennis Go, who is also a member of the TSU Board of Regents, mentioned that they are

planning to pass a provincial ordinance to regulate the use of computer shops which will seek the prioritization of students who will engage in flexible learning.

#### MEETING WITH TARLAC OFFICIALS, DICT, INTERNET PROVIDERS, AND THE EDUCATION SECTOR

TSU was not alone in addressing their concerns on Internet connectivity for students in flexible learning.

On June 17, Cong. Yap called for a meeting with the chief executives of the second district, Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), telecommunications companies, and the Tarlac education sector composed of TSU, Department of Education – Tarlac City, and Tarlac City Private Educational Institutions Association (TCPEIA).

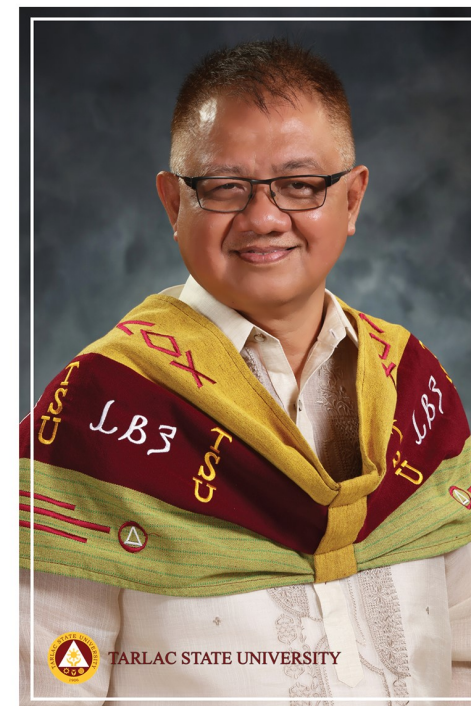
Tarlac Governor Susan Yap, mayors, officials of the education sector, and telcos convened at the Bulwagang Kanlahi while Cong. Yap, Asec. Emmanuel Rey Caintic of DICT, and Cong. Paul Ruiz Daza of Northern Samar were connected via Zoom.

Said meeting sought the advice of the DICT to boost Internet connectivity in Tarlac, particularly in the second district.

Telcos were also asked about their plans to address Internet connectivity issues especially in the far-flung areas.

[**Maria Adelaida Calayag**]

## Dizon named new NHCP Commissioner



Dr. Lino L. Dizon, Head of TSU Center for Tarlaqueño Studies, was appointed by President Rodrigo Duterte as one of the three new commissioners of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) in an official communication from the Malacañan Palace on June 10, 2020.

As commissioner and local historian, Dizon plans to pursue and focus on enriching the history of Tarlac province starting with the celebration of Gen. Francisco Macabulos’ sesquicentennial (150<sup>th</sup>) birth anniversary in 2021 to enliven and highlight his heroic deeds.

Macabulos is the first Filipino governor of Tarlac and was also branded as the “Liberator of Tarlac” being a local revolutionary general of the Katipunan.

Dizon said he would like to raise public consciousness about the rich history of the province such as recognizing Tarlac as the last capital of the Aguinaldo Republic along with the Casa Real de Tarlac, presently the TSU College of Engineering and Technology building, where President Emilio Aguinaldo signed significant decrees and served as the seat of revolutionary government in 1899.

Sixty-year-old Dizon is one of the pioneering local historians to have a local study center, the Tarlaqueño Center of Studies, in 1987. He also authored histories of Pampanga, Pangasinan, Cavite, and some provinces in Mindanao.

“Dizon is one of the pioneers in professionalization of the local history. Because of his local studies in the province, other local study centers were then established

following his lead,” said Xiao Chua, a public historian who idolizes Dizon since his college years.

“Isa siya [Dizon] sa mga tinitingala sa Kasaysayang Pampook sa Pilipinas, yun yung kanyang distinction. Lino Dizon actually placed Tarlac province on the map because this is his national position of great historical significance,” Chua added.

Dizon also wrote for the local study center of Pampanga (Center for Kapampangan Studies), where he is currently a history consultant, and Cavite (Cavite Studies Center). He has written over 20 books on history especially on Tarlac and Pampanga’s stories, roots, and traces, as well as the politics.

Dizon said he fell in love with writing history way back first year college where he started writing about a church history.

He finished AB History in Jose Rizal College in 1981 where he graduated as cum laude. He pursued his master’s degree in social studies at the University of the Philippines in Diliman. Dizon is also a doctoral degree holder in Philippine Studies also from UP Diliman.

In May 2000, he was awarded as an Outstanding Tarlaqueño for Culture, Arts, and Letters during the 127th founding anniversary of the Tarlac province. [**Maria Adelaida Calayag**]

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video conferencing feature.

The first part was about staying connected with remote learning through Microsoft Teams and Office 365 where participants were equipped with concepts and terminologies on remote and online learning, and synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Also tackled during the session are tips on learning and connecting with students online and establishing routines and creating workspaces that foster learning.

Practical tips were shared such as

checking of attendance online, recording sessions, giving “breaks” to students during synchronous classes, creating “mini polls” to monitor the students’ wellbeing, and engaging students through interactive quizzes.

Meanwhile, the second session focused on building stronger student-teacher connections in a remote learning environment.

A detailed discussion on the practical utilization of Teams for remote and online learning was covered which includes procedures on creating a Team, starting a video conference, recording sessions,

producing pre-recorded lessons, and using OneNote Class Notebook to share resources with students.

Participants received digital copies of certificates of course completion using a given code which were immediately accessed at the end of each training session.

TSU has been utilizing Office 365 since its procurement in September 2017 where every student, faculty, and personnel is given full access to Microsoft applications for learning, teaching, and working using a TSU-generated email address. [**Jazzel Llanelli M. Manabat**]