

FIRMAS

Forging Global Ties: The University of the Philippines and the University of Málaga Partnership

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Angelo A. Jimenez, President. University of the Philippines. (Foto: Misael Bacani, UP MPRO).

In an era where globalization increasingly shapes academic landscapes, the partnership between the University of the Philippines (UP) and the University of Málaga (UMA) exemplifies the strength of cross-cultural collaboration. This dynamic relationship, rooted in the CBHE CALESA program, and anchored by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

signed on December 1, 2023, has connected UP to the International Network of María Zambrano Centers for Transatlantic Studies (AMZET) and led to groundbreaking initiatives, such as a PhD student exchange program. Together, these efforts create a rich tapestry of shared knowledge and cultural exchange, setting a new standard for research and international cooperation.

A Foundation of Mutual Commitment

The MOA between UP and UMA is more than just a formal document; it represents a shared commitment to academic excellence and global collaboration. By combining resources and expertise, both institutions will not only be better equipped to address global challenges with innovative solutions but also to make a lasting impact on our communities, extending beyond academia. The cultural, social, political, and economic exchanges fostered by this partnership will broaden the scope of Transatlantic Studies and establish a strong foundation for a collaborative relationship that enriches the educational experiences of both students and faculty.

The CBHE CALESA Program: Bridging Continents and Cultures

CALESA began as an initiative to connect Europe with the Philippines through law, language, history, and culture. Over the past twelve years, it has effectively served as a bridge, strengthening the ties between universities in the Philippines and Spain. Spearheaded by Prof. José Manuel Perea (Peping) and Prof. Ruben Balane, CALESA embodies a long-standing partnership that focuses on the CBHE CALESA (Capacity Building in Higher Educa-

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tion-Cultural and Academic Links for European and Southeast Asian Universities) program. This initiative goes beyond academia; it fosters intercultural understanding and collaboration between continents.

The origins of CALESA lie in the shared legal traditions and historical connections between Spain and the Philippines. The significant influence of Spanish law on Philippine legislation inspired UMA to re-establish connections with local universities. What started as online International Congresses on Private Law has evolved into face-to-face gatherings involving UP and other institutions. This collaboration has resulted in formal agreements and student exchanges, laying a strong foundation for the CALESA program.

In the Philippines, CALESA plays a crucial role in enriching the academic environment. It facilitates a dynamic exchange of ideas through joint conferences, workshops, and seminars, allowing Filipino students and faculty to engage directly with their European peers. These interactions delve into shared academic interests and explore solutions to global challenges. Furthermore, the program supports collaborative research projects, introducing fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to the Philippine academic community.

For Filipino students, CALESA provides the opportunity to study in Málaga for a semester. A transformative experience that broadens their horizons and enriches their academic journeys. This exposure to diverse educational systems and cultures equips them with a global perspective that is increasingly valuable in today's interconnected world. Likewise, Filipino faculty members benefit from collaborative research opportunities that enable them to push the boundaries of their disciplines and contribute meaningfully to global academic discourse.

PhD Student Exchange: Cultivating Global Scholars

The PhD student exchange program epitomizes the essence of this partnership. It provides doctoral candidates from UP and UMA with unparalleled research opportunities, allowing them to immerse themselves in diverse academic environments. Each academic year, they can enroll in a doctoral program at UMA until they complete their studies, choosing between Spanish or English language courses. This exchange is particularly beneficial for those tackling interdisciplinary research topics, offering a global perspective that is crucial in today's interconnected world.

Currently, only law students have benefited from this initiative, which aims to enhance the country's pool of legal experts and researchers. The program is designed to foster essential legal reforms and in-

novations, helping the legal system respond to 21st century challenges while upholding values such as freedom, equality, democracy, justice, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Graduates of the UP College of Law have enrolled in doctoral programs at UMA, deepening their understanding of Philippine law and legal education at a prestigious university in a country with strong historical and cultural ties to the Philippines.

Moreover, this program benefits not only the students but also builds long-lasting academic relationships and networks. These often lead to future collaborations, joint publications, and groundbreaking research that transcends borders.

Aula María Zambrano: A Cultural Nexus in the Philippines

The Aula María Zambrano de Estudios Transatlánticos (AMZET) at the University of Málaga is a multidisciplinary initiative aimed at fostering collaboration and knowledge transfer among Atlantic World countries. Operated under the Centre for Ibero-American and Transatlantic Studies FGUMA-UMA (CEIT), its main goal is to create a solid framework for Comparative Transatlantic Studies, focusing on the interactions between Europe, North America, and Latin America to promote dialogue and cultural, social, political, and economic exchange. Led by Prof. Juan Antonio García Galindo, AMZET plays a key role in the internationalization strategy of the International Campus of Excellence (ICE) Andalucía TECH.

In the Philippines, under the guidance of Prof. Miguel Blázquez-Carretero, the program serves as a vibrant hub for the Spanish language and culture. It offers language courses, cultural events, and academic seminars at UP, promoting rich intercultural dialogue and fostering a deep appreciation of Spanish culture among Filipino students and faculty. The Aula María Zambrano program also honours Filipino culture within the Hispanic world, facilitating a bidirectional flow of cultural exchange. By supporting research in Spanish and Filipino history, literature, and the arts, the program enriches academic discourse and cultivates a deeper understanding of the shared culture. This initiative not only enhances linguistic and cultural proficiency, but also strengthens bilateral relations through education and shared linguistic and cultural heritage.

A Vision for the Future

The UP-UMA partnership has already made significant strides, but its true potential lies in the future.

Both institutions are committed to expanding their collaborative endeavours and exploring new frontiers in academic and research cooperation. The vision includes joint degree programs, collaborative research centres, cultural activities, and enhanced exchange opportunities that promise to further deepen this remarkable friendship.

In conclusion, the relationship between the University of the Philippines and the University of Málaga is a shining example of how academic partner-

ships can drive global understanding and innovation. Through their joint initiatives, these institutions are not just building a bridge between Europe and Southeast Asia; but creating a pathway for future collaborations that will enrich the global academic community. As we look to the future, the UP-UMA partnership stands as an example of how universities can work together to advance knowledge, foster cultural exchange, and address the complex challenges of our world.