

# **Administration of International Students in the University of the Philippines Diliman: Policies, Practices, Problems and Prospects**

**Pamela C. Constantino, Ph. D.  
University of the Philippines**

## **ABSTRACT**

Changing International student mobility in higher education has been going on in most parts of the world since the last century or even earlier. Student mobility ranks highest in the order of importance among member universities of the International Association of Universities (IAU), a UNESCO based international non-government organization, in its survey conducted in 2003. Educational activities have changed, giving impetus to intercultural, inter-university and cross-border exchanges and agreements among nations. Universities have been obliged to review their academic programs and policies, prioritize researches, upgrade facilities, and augment resources, in order to suit global needs, standards, priorities and preferences.

Universities in developing countries especially in South and Southeast Asia, however, have to catch up to be closer to if not at par with universities in developed countries in terms of academic, structural, and infrastructural preparedness for internationalization. Global economic programs and reform agenda have done much to boost internationalization programs and activities in higher education in these countries.

The University of the Philippines (UP) the only National University and the premier University, has a major share in the internationalization in the country. The Diliman campus being the flagship campus and the seat of Administration of the UP System has the best capability having the largest number of faculty members, students and staff, has the biggest land area (493 acres) the most number of academic programs and courses, among seven autonomous constituent universities (CUs) of the UP System. It has also the most number of International students (around 400) coming from 71 countries topped by Korea, China, Japan, India, and the United States. Facilities, resources, and support system for international students are in place though not as extensive or efficient and as modern as in universities in other countries.

Some of the problems that have been identified with regard to administration of international students enrolled in UP are the following:

1. UP Academic Calendar not in conjunction with that of other countries, i.e. June instead of September opening of classes
2. TOEFL – only policy of the University for English requirement disregarding other English Examinations given in other Regions
3. Delays in evaluation and processing of documents for admission due to the following:
  - a. Late submission of official TOEFL result
  - b. Non-submission of student visa for issuance of study permits

- c. Non-submission of original transcripts of records
- d. Submission of spurious documents
- 4. Appeal for tuition discounts and fees despite the very low tuition per semester in U.P.
- 5. Failing grades due to excessive absences and non-compliance with class requirements
- 6. Cases of cheating and plagiarism
- 7. Expectation of students for world-class facilities
- 8. Attitude problems among international students

Some suggestions and solutions to problems, improvements in the administration of international students in U.P. but can be shared with other universities in developing countries are the following:

- 1. Institutionalization of a systematic process and program especially with universities in the Region where English is not the medium of instruction wherein an inter-institutional exam can be constructed
- 2. Coordination with agencies and institutions that provide scholarships to international students
- 3. Review of University policies on admission and student / research assistantship for international students
- 4. Strengthening of tutorial / mentoring and socialization services
- 5. Review of the University Academic Calendar to jibe with the schedules in other universities. (on-going)
- 6. Provision for a pre-departure orientation in the sending country and welcome seminars in host country for International Exchange Students
- 7. Provision for a systematic, stress-free, efficient, prompt, reliable processing of documents