



2020

THE past few weeks have been difficult and challenging as the university was hurled into a whirlwind of activities all directed to combat COVID-19. With inspired leadership starting from the UP President all the way down to project and team leaders and the magnanimous help from several quarters, we have put in place an unprecedented movement.

The Philippine General Hospital (PGH) has been retrofitted and is now filled with selfless medical personnel caring for the very sick COVID-19 patients.

The *Bayanihan Na!* Operations Center is manned by dedicated volunteers, most of whom are interns, students, faculty, and alumni of the University, who answer queries regarding disease and donations. Dashboards have been developed to track

the money and all forms of contributions.

The NIH and PGH COVID Testing Centers are in full swing to contribute 2000 tests to the national goal of 10,000 a day.

Significantly, these very trying times have challenged the minds of our constituents and a multitude of exciting ideas have become landmark discoveries, starting with the locally developed COVID-19 testing kits. At least 24 researches are in the pipeline: development of locally designed ventilators; design and development of locally-manufactured and reusable Powered Air-Purifying Respirator; design and development of Disinfection-SaniPod, a self-contained disinfecting cubicle; the CleanIntubate-laryngoscope blade disinfecting device; telepresence and telemetry;

and several treatment protocols to hasten the resolution of symptoms. These projects brought researchers from different institutions, planning and working together on shortened timelines. The Department of Science and Technology challenged our researchers to think fast, act quickly, and deliver tomorrow.

Additionally, this upheaval put a stop to the usual academic activities in the campus with the Enhanced Community Quarantine. We now have a shortened semester, appealing to a tempered response to a chaotic norm. The Deans and their teams worked on several alternatives for learning in crisis opportunities. We have to face this semester and probably the next year as a modified year



**T**RUE to its role as a leading research university responding to the health problems and needs of Filipinos, UP Manila's early response to the Covid 19 pandemic was the development of the first RT PCR local testing kit for the Covid-19 virus. The kit was developed by Dr. Raul Destura, an infectious disease specialist who is UP Manila NIH Director of National Training Center for Biosafety and Biosecurity and the Deputy Director of Philippine Genome Center in collaboration with a team of young scientists from the Research and Biotechnology Division of Manila HealthTek, Inc. The development of the testing kit has proven that even in a resource-limited setting such as the Philippines, an appropriate technology can be done in a few weeks in response to a health emergency, providing a concrete example of the capabilities of the local science and technology environment.

The testing kits are now being rolled out as part of the national government efforts to curb the further spread of the virus through expanded testing. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officially announced its approval of the testing kit, GenAmplify™ Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) RT-PCR Detection Kit on 3 April 2020 after three weeks of field validation.

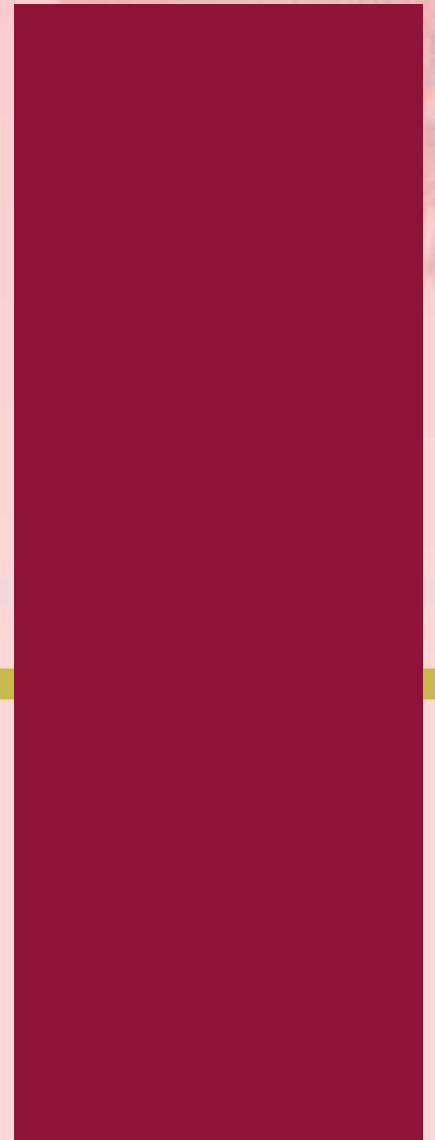
The testing kits are being manufactured by the Manila HealthTek, Inc, the first university spin-off company.





serious complaints over the phone became the substitute for services we would have otherwise given at the now-closed PGH OPD.

Phone consults have limitations because we can only advise based on the information the patient gives that may be hard to verify. Using this hotline also entails privacy risks, the protection of which is part of the commitment of our volunteers. Despite these constraints,





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## Chancellor's Message...

that will include several bridging programs, a catch-up in the clinics and self-paced studies as the primary mode of learning.

During World War II, the College of Medicine and what was then the School of Nursing remained open and provided the needed manpower for PGH. This was described in history as being immersed in the greatest trial of their existence. All doctors know that Quisumbing Hall was named after Intern Rety Quisumbing who was shot dead, mistaken for an enemy, while bringing medical supplies to the operating room.