

The WORK STUDENT STUDY PROGRAM: CENTENNIAL LEGACY of Central Philippine University



By Juanito M. Acanto, Ph.D

The Work Student Study Program has been innate in the establishment of Jaro Industrial School, the forerunner of Central Philippine University or CPU. It is one program that has existed since 1905 and is still very extant and progressive today. The very character of the school is to have students who work for their studies. The school desires to give opportunity for poor Filipino boys to receive a good Christian industrial education by working their way through school. The pupils are exposed to actual work experience and earnest study of the Bible.

In 1905, this work-study educational concept was very vital in awakening the Filipino consciousness towards self-determination, especially in this part of the country. The more than three centuries of Spanish colonization had driven the Filipinos deep into the gully of ignorance and loss of confidence. Education was confined to the rich few families, especially



those with Spanish descent and its purpose was social refinement and distinction rather than preparation for a trade or profession. With the total liberation from Spanish rule, the Filipinos saw the dawning of educational opportunities through the American missionaries.

The establishment of Jaro Industrial School placed the Baptist Missionaries in a holistic stance of developing the body, mind, and spirit. Before 1913, all students of the Jaro Industrial School were work students. The American missionaries inculcated in the hearts and minds of the work students the value that "labor is honor". This is a far contrast from what had been the Filipino-Spanish culture that was: labor is menial and undignified. The students worked for four hours on the farm, in the shop, or in construction, and four hours a day in the classroom. Saturday afternoons and Sundays were free from work or classes. Sundays were spent in the church and in religious or quiet recreational activities.

With the establishment of the junior college, Jaro Industrial School became Central Philippine College in 1923. The primary aim of the college was to train Christian workers and teachers. The teachers were expected to immerse into the public-school system, aspire for improvement, and lead the way to educational progress. Central Philippine College imposed stringent requirements for admission and selection, such as accepting only students with the ability to do high-quality work. With this requirement, Central Philippine University institutionalized total

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quality work among her students and graduates and at the same time provided a venue for the Christian renewal experience.

The tradition of giving “work scholarships” through which students could earn enough to cover their tuition costs continues until now. Apparently, the Work Student Study Program intends to help deserving young people achieve education in spite of their inability to pay for it. As years passed and more students enrolled at Central, the Work Study Program became the opportunity avenue for poor and needy students to gain college education.

New applicants are screened by means of tests, interviews, school records, and recommendations. They must maintain a general average of at least 2.5 or C+. Their work is supervised by the staff member in charge of the area to which the student is assigned. Successful applicants according to their measured capacity and ability are assigned to different work areas in the university, e.g. as office and laboratory assistants, library assistants, and janitorial services personnel. The Work Student Study Program committee conducts a regular semester evaluation on the work performance of each work student. The evaluation result is used as basis for a possible promotion to other assignments or termination of contract if the student unsatisfactorily performed his/her duties.

In a real sense, the work students are a part of the work force of the university because they serve as additional personnel for some of the necessary services to faculty, staff, and students. They serve as assistants in the maintenance and upkeep program for the buildings and grounds; as library assistants, office clerks, laboratory assistants, assistants in the school stores, canteens and enterprises; as farm workers and caretakers of livestock in the College of Agriculture. Their remuneration is in the form of remission of tuition and other fees.

Some of the work-students who received their basic education at Central later became part of the administrative staff. CPU became the beneficiary of her own investment because work-students who graduated preferred to serve



their Alma Mater and in them was bred the concept of diligence and faithfulness to their work and a special appreciation of what their Alma Mater had sown. There are work-student alumni who excelled in their respective fields and express their love to CPU through donations in the form of endowments for scholarships, professorial chairs and faculty and staff incentives, and all out support in any fund raising programs of the university.

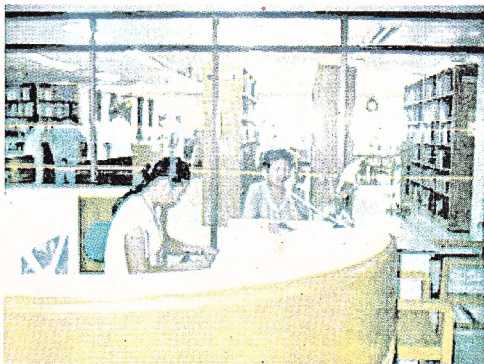
Allow me to mention two alumni who worked their way through college and became successful in their respective careers. Sharing their success with CPU, each of them financed the construction of buildings at CPU. Dr. Alfonso Uy gave for the construction of the four-storey Student Union Building and the two-storey EXCEL Center. The Student Union Building is the “mall and food court” of the University as the first and second floors are occupied by food and dry goods stores. Offices related to direct student

services, such as the Guidance Service Center, Office for Student Affairs and the Chaplain's office occupy the third floor. Meanwhile, the fourth floor is a multi-function room for seminars and conferences. Another alumnus, Rev. Johnny Ancheta provided for the construction of the College of Theology Building and provided additional endowment for its maintenance. Dr. Uy and Rev. Ancheta testify that their Alma Mater had given much for their success, among others, the opportunity to study at CPU and their personal encounter with their Savior, Jesus Christ.

My predecessor, Dr. Agustin Pulido supported the sustainability of the work-study philosophy of Central Philippine University. I have also pledged to make the work-study program as the centerpiece of my administration starting this year and in the years to follow because I believe that by uplifting their state through skills and values training, developing their work ethics and values, CPU would be able to graduate students who are professionals through and true.

Presently, the Work Student Study Program of CPU operates on the vision to provide a path for quality college education for the less privileged but highly motivated and deserving high school graduate students. It commits to assist the University in attaining her goal of exemplary Christian education for life amongst less privileged high school graduate students.

At present, CPU has 735 work students; 401 work in special offices and laboratories; 187 man the janitorial services; 147 work in the



libraries. The program is equipped with support services for the students whenever circumstances or financial problems may hinder their study at CPU. The work student could apply for emergency or medical loan once every semester in case he or she is sick or in urgent need of money. A work student could also procure school supplies every 1st semester at the Student Service Enterprise, the university's canteen and grocery store, whenever he/she had accumulated credits in his/her account for overtime or extra work.

In a baseline data gathered in 2003, of the 634 work students, 80 percent belong to a family whose parents earn less than P5,000.00 or \$90 (P1=\$55.50) per month. Their fathers are working as farmers (24.25%); drivers (8.25%); entrepreneurs (4.25); government or private employees (4.5%); laborers (23.75%); the rest are unemployed. Fifty-four percent of mothers are housewives; the rest work as housemaid (8.75%); government or private employees (8.25); vendors and storekeepers (12%); farmer/laborers (6%). Interestingly, 25.25 percent of mothers are working as teachers. Apart from their work load in school, 33 percent of work students have odd jobs. They work as waiters, household help, gas station attendants, tutors, and others.

In late 2003, a unit supervisor found out that the reason her work students were not responsive to instructions was because they report for work without eating breakfast. It was also learned that some work students who had no money to buy lunch would just hang out at the Half-moon Drive Shed (a hang out area in the campus) while waiting for their classes. This learning led the mobilization of the program "rice for work students" but was later renamed as "God's G.R.A.C.E. (Gospel Relived to Appreciate Christ's Example) Feeding Program" when the committee in-charge decided to provide meals instead of merely giving rice to work students. The Work Student Supervisor revealed that 100 more work students could qualify in the God's Grace Feeding Program but the budget is only enough to feed 45 persons for the school year.

For over two years now, CPU has been implementing the God's G.R.A.C.E. (Gospel Relived to Appreciate Christ's Example) Feeding Program to the most needy work students. This school year, the program provides lunch to 45 (as the budget would suffice) selected most needy work students. The program was triggered by the astounding discovery that lots of work students go to their work assignments and classes on empty stomachs for lack of money.

This was Ben's (not his real name) case, a work-student who is in 2nd year BS Math now. Encouraged by his teachers in a rural high school in Iloilo province, he went to CPU to enroll but without assurance of full support. Losing his father at 13, the eldest of six siblings and her mother earning from farm chores, Ben has only his determination to study at CPU. While processing his work-study application, he had to sleep in the hallway of one of CPU's buildings for he had no place to stay. In the first month of school, Ben would sleep and eat with work student friends for the support he gets from his high school teachers was not enough. There were days when his friends were not around; he would just sleep off his hunger. Upon knowing of Ben's predicament, the work student supervisor, with the help of the University Church deacons recommended that he be enlisted in the God's GRACE Feeding Program. Then the University Church decided to provide shelter and work for him.

The University Church is the program carrier of the project with the help of the Social

Work Department, Office for Student Affairs, and President's Office. CPU is generating financial support for the sustainability of the project. Recently, such support came from former work student Mr. Mauro Somodio, an alumnus living in Australia, a very concerned individual committed to give CPU annual support for ten years.

During the CPU Centennial Week on 31 July to 6 August, while the rest of the CPU community was celebrating, alumni who were work students met and organized the Work Students Alumni Association, Inc.. The association aims to support the Work Student Study Program of CPU by establishing a resource center for work students. The resource center would provide holistic training and development to work students, such as practical vocational skills, personality and Christian values development, and honing their entrepreneurial abilities.

When CPU celebrated her foundation on October 1, the entire special thanksgiving worship offering gathered during the worship services, except those that were specified otherwise, was given to the Work Student Study Program. A portion of the amount went directly to the God's GRACE Feeding program. Indeed, God's greatest glory is seen through the Work Student Study Program. CPU's centennial legacy of "helping the least of our brethren."

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AFTERTHOUGHT

In response to this article, the CPU Federation of Overseas Alumni Association (CPUFOAA) through the leadership of Mrs. Perla G. Londres, agreed to make WSSP/God's GRACE as their priority program this year. They organized the Work Student Study Program Initiative Committee to generate more momentum among the overseas alumni. To help ensure continued success, CPUFOAA committed to raise \$100,000 as endowment fund for WSSP/God's GRACE. Under the matching grant program, CPU will match peso-to-peso donations of at least 100,000 pesos. The matching scheme of CPU is until May 2006 only and allocated funds are still available.

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