



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CHED Chairman Popoy De Vera receives prestigious AsiaEngage Recognition Award**



Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Chairman J. Prospero E. de Vera III, DPA delivered his acceptance speech on Monday for his AsiaEngage Recognition Award (AERA) 2018, which was presented at the gala dinner of the 4<sup>th</sup> AsiaEngage Regional Conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

“The honor that you have bestowed on me today is both a source of pride, humility, and to some degree trepidation. Pride because you have allowed me to join the ranks of distinguished recipients who have received this honor. And humility and trepidation because getting this award requires filling up the large shoes of previous awardees and bestows a responsibility to do better the rest of your life,” expressed Dr. De Vera.

The CHED Chairman is the first Filipino to receive the AERA 2018, a prestigious award that recognizes and honors leaders of ASEAN and Asia who have made outstanding contributions toward distinguished excellence in university social responsibility and sustainability. The AERA is awarded to one exceptional recipient once every two years in conjunction with the organizing of the Regional Conference.

Dr. De Vera is recognized for his work as an educator, public servant and advocacy for community engagement that has contributed to the promotion of excellence in university social responsibility and sustainability.

“I would also like to receive this award in behalf of the Commission on Higher Education which I now chair, and the Philippine universities represented here tonight, the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University and Ateneo de Manila University, whose active work in the various networks under AsiaEngage helped make possible the achievements for which I am being recognized for, and for their own unique programs that manifest the commitment of Philippine universities to promote social responsibility and community engagement,” added De Vera.

The event is organized by the ASEAN University Network University Social Responsibility and Sustainability (AUN USR&S) which is composed of more than 40 leading universities and organizations in the region including top ranking universities in Asia, i.e. the National University of Singapore, Universiti Kabangsaan Malaysia, Universiti of Malaya, Chulalongkorn University, and Universiti Brunei Darussalam. In the Philippines, the University of the Philippines, Ateneo De Manila University and De La Salle University are active members of the Network.

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*Attached:*

*Full text of Acceptance speech of CHED Chairman J. Prospero E. de Vera III during the AsiaEngage Recognition Award ceremony held at the 4th AsiaEngage Regional Conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand, November 26, 2018.*

**A Lifetime of University-Community Engagement<sup>1</sup>**  
**DR. J. PROSPERO E. DE VERA III**  
*Chairman*  
**Commission on Higher Education - Philippines**

I am deeply honored and humbled by the recognition given to me by the officers, member universities, and member-organizations of AsiaEngage in this 4th AsiaEngage Regional Conference held in this historic UNESCO Creative City of Chiangmai, Thailand.

I would like to thank the people behind the AsiaEngage Recognition Award, and give special credit to Universiti Kabangsaan Malaysia Vice Chancellor Prof. Tan Sri Dato Dr. Noor Azalan Ghazali, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Industry & Community Partnerships Prof. Dato' Dr. Imran Ho Abdullah, and Prof. Datuk Dr. Rokiah Hj. Omar, of the UKM University Community Transformation Center for the continuing effort to recognize the men and women whose work and advocacy for community engagement has contributed to the promotion of excellence in university social responsibility and sustainability.

I would also like to receive this award in behalf of the Commission on Higher Education which I now chair, and the Philippine universities represented here tonight, the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University and Ateneo de Manila University, whose active work in the various networks under AsiaEngage helped make possible the achievements for which I am being recognized for, and for their own unique programs that manifest the commitment of Philippine universities to promote social responsibility and community engagement.

I met these administrators and professors when I started representing UP in the ASEAN regional meetings starting 2011. From acquaintances in 2011 we slowly became friends until today and through their efforts the Philippines was able to host the AsiaEngage Regional Conference and the AYVP in 2016. To Ateneo de Manila University Vice President Jimmy Hofilena, Director Lourdes Melegrito of DLSU, and UP Professor Dr. Grace Aguilin-Dalisay who pioneered the UP Pahinungod or volunteer service program and is now representing the university in this conference, thank you for your friendship, and your continuing advocacy to make universities relevant to the communities and nation they serve.

The honor that you have bestowed on me today is both a source of pride, humility, and to some degree trepidation. Pride because you have allowed me to join the ranks of distinguished recipients who have received this honor. And humility and trepidation because getting this award requires filling up the large shoes of previous awardees and bestows a responsibility to do better the rest of your life.

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<sup>1</sup> Acceptance speech given by CHED Chairman J. Prospero E. de Vera III during the AsiaEngage Recognition Award ceremony held at the 4th AsiaEngage Regional Conference in Chiangmai, Thailand, November 26, 2018.

I must tell you now, with all candor and honesty, that getting awards was never one of the “to do” things that I wrote when I was young, or in my “bucket list” as I grew older.

Looking back I now realize that I was born into public service. My father was a lawyer-public servant who implemented the land reform program under then Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay to give land to landless peasants to stop the growing insurgency in the country. My mother was a public school teacher who came from an old Protestant clan known for promoting education and evangelizing communities in Northern Luzon.

Thus, I remember spending my secondary school vacations with Indigenous Peoples in the uplands of the Cordillera mountains and with landless farmers in my home province of Pangasinan.

When I became a professor at the University of the Philippines, I never considered the classroom to be separate from the community and government by ensuring that my experiences and researches in the field were integrated into my lectures, by bringing my students to the community, and by continuing my advocacy for indigenous peoples rights as Chairman of the Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), a civil society organization that helped indigenous peoples claim their land rights.

I also worked in government, particularly in the Philippine Congress, for close to three decades at the same time that I was Professor of Public Administration.

My transition from faculty member to Vice President for Public Affairs of UP allowed me to do three things: First, it united me with similarly situated advocates of university-community engage through the AsiaEngage meetings organized by UKM and the conferences organized by AsiaEngage member-universities across the region; second, gave me the authority to institutionalize the historically neglected mandate of public service of the university; and third, collaborate with other Philippine universities in promoting community engagement projects.

This new position also allowed me to spearhead the creation of a UP Padayon Public Service Office to coordinate all public service activities of the 16 campuses of the university, launch the first ever Public Service Awards to recognize the outstanding programs of the different colleges, and create incentives in giving professorial chairs to faculty members who wanted to focus their efforts to public service.

Now as Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and member of the Cabinet, I am able to promote university-community engagement across the whole Philippine higher education system, across close to 2,000 public and private higher education institutions across the country, through higher education policies, funding and recognition.

In summary, these positions have given me the opportunity and authority to push for stronger university-community engagement. I am sure many of those gathered here tonight would do the same thing, maybe even do it better, if given the opportunity.

So again AsiaEngage, thank you for the recognition. It is an affirmation that I made the right decision to be an educator and a public servant.

It is also a recognition that make me now commit to put in place a recognition and incentive system so that Philippine universities will be more serious in their responsibility to the communities they serve, to document their innovative practices and publish these, to create the necessary incentive system in their recruitment and promotion systems, to link their teaching, research and community engagement functions, and to work with other universities in the country and in the ASEAN and Asian regions to promote university-community engagement.

I also commit to fully support all AsiaEngage activities in the future. All these, so that I can look back years from now and say that my name deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as those awarded previously.

Maraming salamat po. Magandang gabi sa inyong lahat, mabuhay ang AsiaEngage at mabuhay tayong lahat! In English - Thank you to everyone. Good Evening. Long live AsiaEngage. And Cheers to all participants of this conference.