

Expanding Frontiers: Vision and Plans for the Virata School of Business, 2019-onwards

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Vision

With a strong orientation to push frontiers, a collaborative spirit, and a delivery mindset, my vision is that the School delivers distinctive teaching, research, and extension services in business.

... push frontiers

My plans:

1. question the status quo (e.g., Master's programs, support model);
2. consider alternatives (e.g., research productivity, faculty recruitment and development, alumni engagement); and
3. (re-) open up new ways (e.g., career placement, PhD marketing, association membership)

Figure 1 summarizes my plans by the primary stakeholder affected, while recognizing that many of the plans simultaneously impact other groups. These plans result from: (1) our realities as gleaned from the School's annual reports; (2) my observations and experiences over the last five years in our School; (3) feedback from some faculty, staff, administrators, students, and alumni I have spoken with; and (4) my personal aspirations.

Figure 1: Summary of Plans



... a collaborative spirit and a delivery mindset

My plans are my offerings to our School – a roadmap but not a fixed path. Execution against these plans will take a collaborative and programmed approach – dialogue, adjustment, iteration, and if necessary, rejection – to ensure implementation that is acceptable and sticky.

I have a unique background – a business professional turned academic. With over 20 years of business experience in various firms, I have developed strong collaboration and communications skills, as well as a team and mentoring orientation. Furthermore, I have learned to balance conceptual and analytical thinking with execution. Through increased interaction and participation from various stakeholders, and the active role of the executive/operating committee¹ in implementation, these plans will be reality.

A. Student

Realities

1. Student population: Approximately 1,000 students enrolled: 75% Bachelor's, 23% Master's, and 1-2% PhD students. Approximately 275 new students per year: 65% Bachelor's, 33% Master's, 1-2% PhD students (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
2. Scholarship: Approximately 13% of the total enrollee receive scholarship from either our School or the University; approximately 20% of the Bachelor's students receive a scholarship; and 3% of the Master's students receive a scholarship coming only from our School (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
3. Exchange program: Spike in the number of students going on exchange to 30 versus the two prior year average of about 15 (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
4. Graduates: (1) Approximately 80% of the Bachelor's graduate with honors (From the 2018 School's Annual Report); (2) Often 100% passing rate in the accountancy board examination, with several in the top 10; and (3) No visibility as to the graduates' careers post-graduation.
5. Any Dean has to working within the constraint of a large, public university with its clear rules, regulations, and processes to comply with.

Plans

We should enhance our offering to the student with respect to our philosophy (open door policy), activities (educational term/summer abroad, career placement), physical environment, teaching content, and course programs. The responsibility to deliver against these plans fall on the program heads.

¹ Comprising of the Dean, the three Program Directors (Doctoral, Masters and Undergraduates), two Department Heads (Finance and Accounting and Business Administration), and the College Secretary

1. Open door policy

I encourage students to openly communicate with me – to offer suggestions, to provide (or solicit) feedback, to discuss School matters that is of importance to them. I would like to foster an environment of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect. This openness goes by the way for all the stakeholders of the School.

2. Support educational term/summer abroad

Driven by unique personal motivations, some students may want to spend a term or summer abroad. For those who want to gain this international exposure, we encourage you to do so. For those who want to but may struggle to fund it, let us jointly explore how we can include this activity in our fund-raising efforts (connected to plan 11 and 12).

3. Boost involvement in career placement

The reputation and ranking of a business school rests partly on the employability of its students. Our School plays very little role in our graduates' initial career placement. This is unfortunate given this is the first touch point in alumni engagement (connected to plan 12). Much of the efforts is left in the hands of the student organization Career Assistance Program (CAP).

We should increase our ownership of our student's initial career placement. We need to investigate the range of possible involvement and the various alternatives available to us. Involvement can be anywhere from low-touch, where a particular faculty, staff, or administrator works with CAP; to high-touch, where we create a career placement office. Also, we should innovate and examine how social media such as LinkedIn can increase the visibility of our graduates, and increase our visibility of available career opportunities for our graduates. After the exploration, a choice has to be made and implemented.

Efforts to increase involvement in career placement post-graduation should first be focused on the Bachelor's graduates. At a later stage, once we are more knowledgeable on career placement and the review of the Master's programs is complete (connected to plan 6), these services can then be extended to this group as well.

4. Enhance physical environment

The ongoing and needed work on the building premises must proceed². A conducive learning environment does not only benefit the students, but also the faculty, staff, and administrators.

² (1) Renovation of UP Business Research Foundation, Inc. office; (2) Renovation of Room 312 Communication Laboratory; (3) Rehabilitation of water system, sewage lines and toilets; (4) Rehabilitation of electrical system to support new air-conditioning units and an elevator; (5) Rehabilitation of Lopez Jaena Street (parking area Vinzon's side); (6) Sixth floor tiling

5. Continue creation of teaching materials

Teaching materials need to continually be created given the new courses added to the revised Bachelor's programs, the need to localize teaching materials, or even the mere absence of usable teaching materials. We have put in place a system of content creation that works. Creation of teaching material should continue its current course – completing the materials currently in development, pushing on the materials identified³, and ensuring increased faculty participation (connected to plan 8 and 9).

6. Review the Master's programs, plus others (BGC campus offerings and revised Bachelor's programs)

With the value of a business-related Master's degree regularly being questioned by individuals and industry, we should also examine our own Master's programs. We should thoroughly review our Master's programs, questioning the programs': overall value propositions, target markets, competitiveness versus not only local but also international offerings, modes of delivery (length of program, on our own or in partnership), etc.

In addition, a review of the BGC campus offerings and the new Bachelor's programs are timely. On its third year of operations in 2019, we should review our BGC campus experience: student and faculty performance, quality of facilities and services, etc. Also, by 2020, the first graduates of the K-12 program and the pioneers of the revised Bachelor's programs will be in their third year. Benchmarking of this cohort against past cohort can be initiated and continued until their graduation. Learnings from these reviews will serve as input for any future adjustments to the BGC campus offerings and the Bachelor's programs.

7. Promote the PhD program

Our PhD program has a unique value proposition, being the only one of its kind in the country. It has an untapped market of local business academe who want/need to pursue further education but are constraint by finances, work and/or other responsibilities, etc.

The program, however, is not well known. This program needs to be actively marketed to other business academe through several means, such as: (1) communicating the program's presence and value to the various business colleges in the Philippines; (2) marketing the program via our website and other relevant online presence; (3) conducting an information session for interested students; and (4) allowing interested students to sit in a handful of PhD classes to get a flavor of what to expect.

³ In progress: Cases and Readings in Corporate Governance, BA 114 Intermediate Accounting teaching materials. In proposal stage: Cases in Project Management, Readings and Cases in International Business, BA 116 Cost Accounting teaching materials, and BA 118 Advanced Accounting teaching materials

B. Faculty, Staff, and Administration

Realities

1. School faculty profile: Over 80% of the faculty have a graduate degree⁴, and over 70% are permanent⁵. The faculty profile is balanced with respect to rank, gender and age⁶ (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
2. Content output: Approximately 0.7 content per faculty (article and book chapter) is produced, but production is concentrated to just around 35% of faculty. Furthermore, much of the content produced is teaching materials, with research⁷ amounting to just about 0.25 per faculty (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
3. Teaching profile: Approximately 25% of the courses are taught by part-time lecturers and/or professor emeriti (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
4. Faculty are independent minded people, with their own research interest, work style and pace.
5. Staff and administration profile: Hiring in the last 24 months has right-sized the faculty to staff ratio to 1:0.535 (vs. University's target or 1:0.5). Staff and administrators are long-tenured (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
6. Staffing gaps: There is a senior staff member retiring in 2019. The records staff is not right-sized (1 staff: 900 records vs. University's ideal ratio of 1 staff: 500 record). The role of Administrative Office (AO) has been vacant for over 10 years (From the 2018 School's Annual Report).
7. The responsibilities of the AO have been spread across several people.
8. Unclear how the University Research Associates' (URA) capacities are being deployed and how to request for their research support.
9. Any Dean has to working within the constraint of a large, public university with its clear rules, regulations, and processes to comply with.

Plans

8. *Foster a culture of research*

We should increase publication productivity per faculty, expand the number of faculty publishing, and elevate the Philippine Management Review (PMR). In order to achieve these aspirations, we need: (1) a research champion, who is faculty; (2) a permanent editor for the PMR (which may also be the same person as point 1); and (3) funding to incentivize and reward published research, likely beyond the existing University and School grants (connected to plan

⁴ Educational degree: 47% Doctorate/PhD, 37% Master's, 16% Bachelor's degree

⁵ Appointment: 74% permanent, 26% temporary

⁶ Rank: 21% Professor, 28% Associate Professor, 33% Assistant Professor, and 19% Instructor; Gender: 44% female, 56% male; and Age: 14% born in the 1950s, 24% in the 60s, 26% in the 70s, 21% in the 80s, and 16% in the 90s

⁷ Research publication award: 25% of faculty- 5% international, 20% national

11 and 12). The assignment of a research champion and/or the PMR editor are critical to owning and driving the School's research and the PMR agendas; also, they are the natural owner of the URA, managing and prioritizing their research capacity across research endeavors (connected to plan 10)

Increase research productivity: Research output and productivity significantly determines an educational institution's reputation and ranking. We should orient our energies towards writing publishable research. Though the ultimate goal is to publish in ISI-SSCI indexed journals⁸, we recognize that the difficult and lengthy process can discourage. In addition to our current efforts to stimulate research, following are some proposals to spur the culture of research:

1. Encourage the creation of two to three research interest groups with a clear research focus/output, and offer them a group research grant. This joint research offers: (1) mentorship for junior faculty by senior faculty (connected to plan 9); (2) cross-fertilization of ideas; and (3) group support to complete research.
2. Review and/or enhance the requirements of our grant system requirements from just mere research presentation to research publication, at the very least with the PMR. This urges the faculty to write and provide the PMR a flow of research.
3. Through the research champion, track the research pipeline and progress of faculty who ideally have a 1-1-2 pipeline: 1 article currently in the review process, 1 article in the process of development, and 2 ideas for future research; and
4. Revive the regular (say monthly) research series to achieve research dissemination, as well as other benefits such as: (1) learning and development for our faculty (connected to plan 9) and staff; and (2) community building. The PhD seminar series was a good start but it needs continued momentum.

Elevate the PMR: The PMR is one of the journals for this increased research output. However, the journal needs elevation, and following are a few proposals to boost it: (1) complete its long-planned listing in Clarivate Analytics (formerly ISI) and Elsevier's Scopus, and possibly other relevant international database; (2) clarify the journal's positioning; (3) expand its authorship base beyond our School; and (4) aspire to publish twice a year.

9. Intensify faculty recruitment and development

We should continue to hire full-time faculty and/or explore different arrangements with part-time lecturers to ensure capacity. Also, we should nuance our faculty development. In order to achieve these aspirations, we should experiment on new recruiting sources, mentoring approaches, and non-traditional, non-tenure tracks. The responsibility to deliver against these plans fall on the department chairs.

⁸ ISI-SSCI stands for Institute for Scientific Information Social Science Citation Index. This has since been purchased by Clarivate Analytics

Recruiting: After determining our faculty gaps, and beyond our current recruiting resources, we should look at new recruiting sources such as a School referral programs (possibly with rewards for successful hires), and online sources like LinkedIn.

Mentoring: Once within our School, we should ensure the faculty's success and retention. In addition to current actions, we should create opportunities for new faculty to create ties with our School through a more structured: (1) one-week induction program, where the new faculty could possibly shadow the department chair to understand the working of our School; and (2) buddy system, where an older-tenured faculty is assigned to a new faculty to watch over him/her for at least the first six months.

Aside from creating initial School ties, a more personal touch in faculty development is essential. Opportunities for faculty to find their mentors must be created, or absent that, a more systematic assignment pairing of senior-junior faculty member may be needed. Following are a few ways to increase interaction within our School and/or department: (1) research interest group and research series (connected to plan 8); and (2) increased frequency of department meetings (say bi-monthly), with and agenda beyond reportorial and decision-making to planning, problem solving, and maybe just community building.

Non-traditional tracks: We should investigate the possibility of non-traditional, non-tenure track for both full- and part-time faculty. We recognize that the University has no guidelines on this matter and continues to grapple with this concept. However, given the unique nature of business education, where depth of industry, practical experience is valuable to teaching, we may be losing out on great faculty because of the demands of research and tenure track. We may take a lead in thinking through this concept.

10. Increase staff, refocus responsibilities

We should de-load faculty of administrative work and refocus staff and administrators to their original job description by ensuring we fill the gaps in the headcount. The hiring of the AO is critical in unlocking all these opportunities.

Filling the gaps in the headcount is of immediate priority given the lengthy process of doing so. Three posts are of importance: (1) replacement for a retiring senior staff member; (2) additional staff in the student's record group; and (3) filling up the long-vacated AO post.

The role of the AO is significant. In the absence of one, this role has been split across several people, which has resulted in: (1) diversion of the staff and administrator from their primary responsibilities (e.g., URA distraction from research); (2) faculty owning large chunks of the administrative load (e.g. building maintenance) reducing their focus from their primary role of teaching and research; and (3) unclear ownership of the administrative agenda of our School (finance, personnel, building maintenance, allocation of work load, etc.). Once in place, the AO also drives the enhancement of the physical environment (connected to plan 4).

The activities of a URA is black box to many faculty – how can they help in research, who is responsible for allocating their capacity across research projects, etc. The research champion (connected to plan 8) should watch over this group’s capacity allocation, professional development, additional headcount needs, etc.

Lastly, we should study outsourcing our IT and communication (connected to plan 12) requirements and support. It appears that our IT needs are handled by people who just have an interest in IT but not necessarily the requisite expertise nor time for it. Similarly, any effort to further engage the alumni requires intensified levels of communication, which we do not necessarily have the requisite expertise nor the capacity for.

C. Other Communities

Realities

1. Alumni activities: Low levels of involvement: (1) yearly alumni homecoming; (2) alumni newsletter in our website; and (3) alumni database (From the 2018 School’s Annual Report).
2. No reported School membership in industry/functional associations.
3. External networking is an individual, faculty initiative rather than a School programmed effort.

Plans

We should increase our School’s interaction with the wider business community and the alumni network. These linkages are valuable as they offer several benefits: (1) funding sources (connected to plan 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9); (2) avenues for research (connected to plan 8); (3) internship and career placement for our graduates (connected to plan 3); and (4) speakers for enhanced classroom instructions. The interactions with these external communities are currently driven by individual faculty initiative, and this should continue to be encouraged. However, our School needs to get involved through more programmed interactions. The responsibility to deliver against these plans fall on the Dean and a handful of faculty to be identified.

11. Join relevant business associations

We should identify the relevant industry and/or functional associations we want to be a part of. We then seek membership as a School and send faculty who has interest in the same industry and/or function to represent us. In addition to the earlier mentioned benefits, increased exposure to the business community may open up extension opportunities for our School, another source of School funding.

12. Expand alumni engagement

We have an extensive alumni body that we should further leverage. We should: (1) learn best practice in alumni relations; and (2) align resources against this effort.

Increased alumni engagement is particularly valuable for School fund raising. The discussion of fund raising may be distasteful for many but realities of rising cost greater than government support and free tuition puts pressure on our ability to fund student scholarship and activities, faculty research, recruitment and development, infrastructure, etc. Furthermore, a successful alumnus fund-raising model can then be extended to other prospective non-alumni donors.

Following are initial proposals to tap the alumni for fund raising purposes:

1. Update the alumni contact details and segment the alumni on various dimensions (e.g., industry and functional lines, year of graduation) in order to target communications and donation appeals.
2. Identify our funding needs over the next few years to determine the funding target.
3. Craft donation packages that may focus on: (1) scholarship and/or educational term/summer abroad support to a student or a faculty; (2) research support, say along industry and functional lines; (3) infrastructure support for maintaining or enhancing School facilities and instructional tools; or (4) unrestricted and discretionary use.
4. Support this with a thoughtful communications plan that – creates the links between alumni; shares stories of success or updates of current School students, faculty and fellow alumni; crafts targeted donation appeals; provides periodic updates on the recipient of the donations; etc.

This activity is owned by the Dean but with the advisory board and the faculty as active partners. The advisory board is a problem-solving partner in the generation of fund-raising strategy, plans and ideas, as well as possible leads for donation. The faculty meanwhile is an essential ally in donor visits and crafting the case for support. External parties may also be drawn in, particularly on the communication and donation solicitation aspect, to provide expertise and possibly on-going support.