

## The Housing Situation in UP Diliman

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16 October 2013

The University of the Philippines Diliman is the main campus of the University of the Philippines - a system of seven (7) constituent universities that are located in different parts of the country. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of all regular UP employees are based here – a workforce that is composed of 1,544 regular faculty members, 1,453 administrative staff and 440 REPS [1]. Forty-four percent (44%) and 59% of all UP undergraduate and graduate students respectively, studied in the campus during SY 2011-2012 [2]. The UP President holds office in Quezon Hall, the same building where the UP Board of Regents – the highest policymaking body of the University, conducts its regular meetings.

UP Diliman was envisioned as a residential campus when it was first opened in February 1949. Provisions were made for student dormitories and staff housing given that in the late 1940's the campus was a remote albeit idyllic place to study. Today, more than 60 years later, the situation is vastly different – the 4th Congressional District of Quezon City where the campus is located is highly urbanized and decent affordable housing is difficult to find.

A total of 25,081 students (undergraduates: 70.2%) were enrolled in UP Diliman during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of SY 2013-2014. The College of Engineering (5,062) has the largest undergraduate population followed by the College of Science (1,809) while the College of Education (1,248) has the most number of graduate enrollees followed by the College of Science (929) [3]. In June 2013, 2,515 out of the 3,876 UPCAT qualifiers proceeded to enroll in addition to 794 transferees from other universities and 132 new students who were admitted via the Varsity Athletics Admissions System.

**Housing for Employees.** Within its 493-hectare campus, UP Diliman maintains a total of 1,143 housing units for the use of its faculty and staff until their retirement from government service [4]. The units are of different types – apartments (134), bungalows (141), clustered townhouses (68), cottages (6), walk-up units (256), row houses (135), pioneer houses (17) and other low-cost units (386).

The current demand for campus housing is acute. The number of housing applications that is pending in the UP Diliman Housing Office (DHO) as of August 2013 is five hundred thirty-eight (538) broken down as follows: apartments (151), bungalows (64), clustered townhouses (43), walk-up units (170), and other low-cost units (110) [4]. A housing unit is awarded to a leading applicant only after its official recovery by the DHO. Faculty applicants for example, are ranked by the Diliman Housing Committee via a set of criteria that includes longevity of service, faculty appointment and rank, educational attainment and salary grade, number of children, etc.

**Residence Halls.** The OVCSA Office of Student Housing manages a residence hall system consisting of thirteen (13) dormitories as of June 2013 [5]. Six (6) halls are co-educational with Kalayaan being exclusively for first-year undergraduates; Molave and Yakal for other undergraduates; Ipil and Kamagong for graduate students; and the International Center for foreign students. Female undergraduates could stay in Ilang-Ilang, Kamia, Sampaguita and the Centennial 2 while their graduate student counterparts could apply to Sanggumay. Male undergraduates could reside in the Concordia B. Albarracin Hall. A limited number (40) of varsity student athletes are housed in the Alumni Center (Fonacier Hall).

Presently, the UP Diliman Residence Hall System has a full operational capacity of 3,634 beds. During the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of SY 2013-2014 however, it has been operating only at 66% capacity (2387 residents) due to on-going rehabilitation works in Kalayaan, Kamagong, Ilang-Ilang, Kamia, Sampaguita and Sanggumay [6].

**Updates.** The rehabilitation of the residence halls is due for completion either at the start of (Sampaguita, Kamia) or within the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of SY 2013-2014 (Ilang-ilang, Molave, Yakal, Kalayaan, Sanggumay). It is aimed at improving dormitory facilities and enhancing operational efficiency including the replacement of decrepit water pipe systems [7].

The Balay Atleta (capacity 50 beds) is the latest addition to the UP Diliman Residence Hall System. It is located in 51 Apacible Street and will be ready for occupancy in November 2013. The construction of the four-building Acacia Residence Hall (950 beds) in Apacible corner Laurel Streets is due for completion during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. A building is designated for the exclusive use of College of Law students.

For employees, funding (Php 198M) has been secured from CHED in 2012 for the construction of three (3) four-floor residential buildings (total number of units: 174). These buildings will be located besides the Hardin ng Doña Aurora. The University is now looking for a qualified project contractor in accordance with government procurement procedures (RA 9184).

In December 2012, UP Diliman completed the amortization obligation of its 25-year PAGIBIG loan that financed the construction of Doña Aurora, Rosas and Bougainvillea. Incidentally, the Office of the Campus Architect is currently preparing the technical plans for the rehabilitation (roof repair, repainting, re-piping, etc) of the Hardins. On the other hand, DHO has been coordinating with Manila Water Company Inc. for the individual metering of water connections in Hardin units. Individual metering will reduce the cost of water consumption by resident-users due to customer-type reclassification (from semi-business to residential). It will also rationalize the maintenance and monitoring of the pipe system to the advantage of UP Diliman.

**Challenges and Initiatives.** In his or her lease contract agreement with UP Diliman, an employee is supposed to relinquish his or her housing privileges upon compulsory retirement at the age of 65 [8]. However, there are many instances that the agreement is not honored. DHO records reveal that a hundred sixty-three (163) units are being occupied by overstaying retired employees (faculty: 17, administrative: 142, REPS: 4) and another fifty-four (54) units by residents who are not regular UP employees – two (2) were previously assigned to faculty members, 51 to administrative personnel and one (1) to a REPS staff.

While the DHO has been able to achieve a relative degree of success in the recovery of overstayed or illegally occupied units in the last two years through the tireless effort of its staff, the task has remained doubly difficult due to the lack of cooperation or sheer intransigence of the present residents.

The excess demand for campus student housing that has persisted for years, is resulting in the existence of unregulated boarding houses and even dormitories that were opened for business without the necessary permits from the University. The Office of Student Housing in coordination with local government units has implemented programs that promote the safety and welfare of the concerned student boarders.

The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Community Affairs (OVCCA) has initiated programs to enable UP employees to acquire their own affordable housing units in off-campus locations. A new Memorandum of Agreement was forged between PAGIBIG and UP Diliman that aims to provide additional assistance and easier terms of payment for housing loans. Housing fairs and on-site visits have been organized for employees. Plans are also being discussed to construct additional multi-storey residential buildings in the campus through PAGIBIG financial assistance.

Discussions are also on-going regarding the rehabilitation of the International Center. To become a regional and global university (RA 9500, Section 3), UP must be able to attract foreigners to enroll as regular students. The presence of foreign students and faculty members promotes diversity and multiculturalism in the campus and it is key towards improving the academic reputation of UP among the leading universities in Asia and the world. However, the lack of adequate housing facilities has prevented UP Diliman from hosting a larger number of students from different countries of the world [9].

This article aims to improve our understanding of the housing situation in UP Diliman and to let us know about the programs that have been undertaken to improve it.

### References

1. In June 2012, there were 8,905 regular UP employees [47.4% administrative staff, 41.1% faculty, 11.2% research, extension and professional personnel (REPS)] excluding those who served in the Philippine General Hospital (Source: OVPA).
2. UP student population: 52,405. On average (August 2007 – August 2012), 64% of UPCAT examinees per year apply for admission into UP Diliman. The number of UPCAT applicants is increasing at an average annual rate of 4%. In August 2013, there were 83,508 UPCAT examinees.
3. Sixty percent of students live in Quezon City and another 12% in Marikina, Pasig and Manila (Source: Office of the University Registrar, 27 June 2013).
4. Source: OVCCA Diliman Housing Office (<http://ovcca.upd.edu.ph/offices-and-committees/the-diliman-housing-office-dho/>). Typical monthly rental rate for a bungalow unit is Php 20 per square meter of floor area. A number of units are occupied by UP Manila employees.
5. <http://ovcsa.upd.edu.ph/osh.htm>
6. Number of student applications in 1<sup>st</sup> semester, SY 2013-2014: 4,249 (55% male). Monthly lodging rates per student resident: Kalayaan (Php 500, two beds per room), Yakal (Php 250, four beds; Php 350, two beds), Centennial Dorm (Php 1500, six beds).
7. Supported by funds secured from CHED in 2012.
8. A retired UP employee may extend use of housing unit for another 2 years subject to DHO approval.
9. There were 275 foreign students in UP Diliman during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, SY 2011-2012. In SY 2000-2001, the number was 70 (OVCAA Office of Extension Coordination). A sensible goal in the next 5 years is to increase the number of international students to 10% of the UP Diliman student population.