U.P. Baguio Statement

In view of recent reports of red-tagging of UP Baguio students, organizations, and alumni, the University of the Philippines Baguio is reissuing its “University Council Statement on the Militarization of Campuses” issued 25 October 2019.

From the University Council Statement, we emphasize our stand to “denounce the deliberate and covert efforts of some sectors of the government to suppress critical thinking” and “reaffirm our commitment not to be silent in the face of injustice, corruption, and oppression in our society.” UP Baguio “will continue to nurture critical and independent thinking, and defend and exercise our role as social critic and agent of change.”

UP Baguio rejects all acts curtailing freedom of expression and the public discussion of pressing social issues. We denounce the red-tagging of UP Baguio students, organizations, and alumni, committed by some sectors of the government and its instrumentalities.

We stand to uphold and defend the right to freedom of expression.

The UP Baguio Executive Staff

(27 May 2020)
UP Baguio University Council Statement on the Militarization of Campuses

We, the members of the University Council of the University of the Philippines Baguio, denounce the deliberate and covert efforts of some government sectors to suppress critical thinking in the University, forcing us to renounce on our role to speak truth to power.

These efforts include:

- “Red tagging,” e.g., identifying UP Baguio faculty as recruiters for the New Peoples’ Army, in an orientation by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency organized by the Philippine Information Agency—CAR held in June 2019 in Baguio City, foregrounded by the baseless perception that academic institutions are a hotbed for recruitment by “terrorist elements” targeting students to join their cause and the blatant, intimidating demand by the military for the names of the AIL UP Academic Employees Union members in UP Cebu. We view “red tagging” as an effort to quell dissent and impinge on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. It also puts our constituents’ lives in danger as in the harassment of UP Baguio student leaders and faculty with death threats.

- The recent pronouncement by Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Dr. J. Prospero De Vera III, who is ex-officio Chair of the UP Board of Regents, on the alleged “prevalence” of illegal drugs in UP and the inability of the University to address this issue. This may be used to justify indiscriminate and unreasonable drug testing by outside agencies, which instills a climate of fear, and to bring in the war on drugs into our campuses. Military presence and operations inside our campuses could lead to arrests without due process, or worse, to extrajudicial killings. This is unacceptable given the propensity of certain law enforcers to describe the loss of innocent lives in the war on drugs as “collateral damage,” as exemplified in statements like “shit happens” by former PNP chief now Senator Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa when confronted by the recent death of a 3-year-old child in a buy-bust operation.

Red-tagging and claiming that there is a widespread drug problem inside UP are part of a concerted effort by authorities to establish police and military presence in UP campuses, as per pronouncements by PNP Chief General Oscar Albayalde, DILG Secretary Eduardo Año, and Senator Dela Rosa, and to revoke the 1989 agreement between UP President Jose V. Abueva and then Secretary of the Department of National Defense Fidel V. Ramos. This 1989 Abueva-Ramos agreement defines clear and strict rules of coordination between the UP System and military authorities, and bars the entry of police and military in any UP campus without permission. It protects academic freedom and the rights of individuals to freedom of expression as enshrined in the 1987 Constitution while upholding the laws of the land.

We view these developments as endangering our right to expression and full exercise of academic freedom. Legitimate dissent and opposition do not deserve a military response. To this end, the University of the Philippines Baguio University Council condemns any and all unwarranted attempts to deploy military personnel in the University’s premises, and this condemnation extends to police and military deployment in all other schools and university campuses in the country. We affirm the soundness of the 1989 Abueva-Ramos agreement and demand that the State and the military similarly affirm and respect it.

Militarization of universities only speaks of a misdirected attempt to resolve the decades-old insurgency problem without addressing its socio-political underpinnings. Ironically, it is the universities that continually provide a context to the situation through continuous research as opposed to “intelligence” reports that mistakenly and perennially brand progressive movements as enemies of the state. It is the universities that continually advocate for the continuation of the peace process while schools and universities should always be a zone for peace.

We, the members of the University Council of UP Baguio, re-affirm our commitment not to be silent in the face of injustice, corruption, and oppression in our society. We will continue to nurture critical and independent thinking, and will defend and exercise our role as social critic and agent of change.

(25 October 2019)