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The Ateneo de Manila University played host to three United Board Fellows from India who wanted to learn more about service-learning, whole person education, human resource management, educational administration, and teaching-learning practices during the pandemic. Dr.

Jenish Paul is presently a member of the College Standing Council and Association and the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the Union Christian College Aluva in Kerala. Dr. Samrat Bhattacharjee and Dr. Varbi Roy are both from the Scottish Church College in Kolkata. Dr. Samrat currently is an associate professor of Zoology as well as coordinator of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), and Dr. Varbi is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and joint editor of *journal of humanities and social sciences*, an international refereed journal annually published by the college. They both are joint coordinators of the Service Learning Cell of the college as well.

The United Board Fellows program offers a one-year leadership development program for faculty administrators from Asian colleges and universities who aim to develop a whole person education within their home institutions and have the potential to act as future administrators in their universities/colleges. Dr. Samrat and Dr. Jenish are part of the cohort of 2021-2022 and arrived in the Philippines first in October, while Dr. Varbi is part of the 2022-2023 cohort and came in mid-October for a short study trip. Given their areas of interest, Dr. Leland Joseph Dela Cruz, former Loyola Schools Associate Dean for Student Formation and current Assistant Vice-President for Social Development, Environment, and Community Engagement served as Dr. Samrat's and Dr. Jenish's host. Given his interest in human resource management, Dr. Maria Victoria Cortez, Vice President for Human Resources also served as a host to Dr. Samrat. Dr. Varbi, on the other hand, was guided by Dr. Anne Candelaria, Associate Dean for ADMU's Graduate Programs and Dr. Philip Arnold Tuano, Dean of the Ateneo School of Government. For one month, Dr. Samrat and Dr. Jenish went around the university, meeting with administrators, faculty, professionals, and students to understand and observe how whole person education is implemented through the Loyola

School's unique curriculum. They also interviewed administrators and sat in on administration meetings to get a sense of human resource management and educational administration. Dr. Varbi's five-day trip, however, was much shorter, but she was still able to immerse herself in the university's programs and administrative efforts and joined Dr. Jenish and Dr. Samrat for some activities.



During Dr. Samrat and Dr. Jenish's first week, they met with various formation offices including the Office for Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI), and the Office of the Campus Ministry (OCM) to learn about how Ignatian values and philosophy are integrated into the curriculum, particularly through the National Service Training Program (NSTP). To have a deeper understanding of the program, Dr. Samrat and Dr. Jenish even went with some students for their onsite area engagements at the Marikina Public Market. Subsequently, they delved deeper into the university's human resources management systems, library digitization processes, and the departments they were each particularly interested in—the biology department for Dr. Samrat and the chemistry department for

Dr. Jenish, Dr. Samrat, Dr. Jenish, and Dr. Varbi were also welcomed by the university president, Fr. Roberto Yap, S.J. and the Vice President for the Loyola Schools, Dr. Maria Luz Vilches. For their final week, they visited other universities who are also members of the United Board such as the Trinity University of Asia, Miriam College, and De La Salle University to observe their best practices and discuss possible areas of collaborations for future.

The university's service-learning programs particularly interested both Dr. Samrat and Dr. Jenish during their four-week stay. Upon observing onsite area engagements and attending NSTP and Social Sciences classes, they identified the systematic and methodical implementation of the program as one of its main strengths which they also hope to achieve at their home institutions. They even recalled their experience with the students assigned to the public market, noting how everything was well-organized and structured, including the coordination with community partners which made the session go smoothly. Dr. Varbi made similar observations, acknowledging the effective institutionalization of NSTP and other related service-learning activities within the university as part of the required subjects for students. She noted, however, that the decision to conduct portions of the program asynchronously could provide an additional challenge in its execution while the country is still dealing with the pandemic.



When asked about what their first impression was about the university, Dr. Samrat and Dr. Jenish both took note of the beautiful campus, with vast greenery and vibrant spaces for student activities. After their month-long stay in Ateneo, they mentioned that they were moved by the cordiality of everyone on campus, from the students to the administrators and even the staff, which they highly appreciated. Greeting them with smiles created a warm environment that made them feel like they were in their home institution. This was also noted by Dr. Varbi who appreciated the hospitality extended to her by the university, with Dr. Candelaria and Dr. Tuano helping arrange her itinerary during her stay and Dr. PJ Strelbel, chair of the Philosophy Department, promptly offering an invitation to a webinar at the end of this month as an opportunity for collaboration in the fields of teaching and service-learning.

Furthermore, they also commended the strong integration of spirituality, not just in the service-learning programs, but the whole curriculum as well. Being a student of philosophy herself, Dr. Varbi was surprised to learn that philosophy is taught across all departments as part of the core curriculum, instead of only offering it to humanities students, consequently advancing the university's mission to impart whole person education further. While this is also present in their universities to some extent, they mentioned that the Ateneo's program is exceptional in the sense that the holistic formation they experienced manifests in the students' inner selves even after they step out of the university's boundaries, giving them an edge over their peers.

Their observations and interactions with people on campus made them further realize the importance of whole person education. As Dr. Samrat put it, a student enters Ateneo and leaves as a different person because of the service-learning experiences that instill a lasting concern for society within them, no matter what career they choose to pursue after college. They emphasized that while academic excellence is necessary, the students' spirituality should also be nurtured by the university's curriculum, an aspect which they wish to improve on within their home institutions.



Dr. Samrat, Dr. Varbi and Dr. Jenish returned to India at the end of October. The 2021-2022 cohort will be concluding their whole experience under the United Board Fellows Program with a final seminar in Singapore this coming May 2023. The 2022-2023 cohort will end in November 2023. Although their stay on campus is over, the memories and learnings they have made will hopefully stay with them as they also advance the implementation of whole person education, forming more men and women for and with others—inspired by the Ateneo way.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Samrat Bhattacharjee and Dr. Jenish Paul

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