UST: S006-00-ME28
AY 2019-2020

TO: DEANS, REGENTS, DIRECTORS, PRINCIPALS,
AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

RE: UNIVERSITY'S ASSISTANCE ON INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

DATE: 4 May 2020

For the guidance of the Thomasian community, the UST Committee on Negotiations with telecommunications companies (Telcos) provided initial negotiation updates on 30 April 2020.

Below is a summary of recommendations from the UST TASK FORCE VERITAS, approved by the Acting Rector, Rev. Fr. Richard G. Ang, O.P.:

Focus Area: Internet Connectivity		
Concerns / Issues	Recommended Action(s) to be taken	Responsible Unit / Timeline
Students' internet connectivity problems/ difficulties in relation to online learning resulting from: 1. local traffic from User side to the public internet; 2. international traffic from public internet to the Server side as Blackboard Learn	The Task Force recommends that immediate assistance be extended to the Users (students and faculty), through the following: 1. Support the proposal of the UST Committee on Negotiations with Telcos to offer the **PLDT/Smart Package 519.35[1]** to students and faculty as an alternative data plan, intended to improve users' internet access. 2. The University will subsidize P/1,000.00 for the plan subscription of students in May. Any succeeding university subsidy is subject to further studies, especially as the OVRF will conduct a major review of students' fees	UST Committee on Negotiations with Telcos OVRF STePs EdTech Center FMO Academic units OSA

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[1] 8 GB data, with pocket wi-fi, worth P1,500 ABS for unlimited data, for a 12-month lock-in contract. It comes with 300K worth of tech units for 5K or more lines; after a year, the pocket wi-fi is turned over to the students.

is hosted in Singapore while Bb Collab is hosted in Australia.	in connection with the new normal or post-ECQ conditions.
	
	3. The Committee shall explore the possibility of the following in favor of the students/faculty who will avail of the said Package:
	   a. Provision of pre-termination clause in case of unsatisfactory service during the 1st month of subscription;
	   b. Provision in the Telcos page of the list of locations/areas where their services are available;
	   c. Provision of hotspots based on number of subscribers and quality of signal;
	
	4. Implementation of the initiative will begin immediately to cover the remaining part of the 2nd term, AY 2019-20, in order to:
	   a. Provide relief to students, if only during the last 3 weeks that they try to cope with coursework, and particularly during the final examinations/final assessment period.
	   b. Support UST's previous commitment to work out possible student-friendly schemes with the Telcos;
	   c. Enjoy the advantages of being among the earlier partner institutions of Telcos, since many other HEIs have already begun their own negotiations with them (e.g. DLSU, TIP);
	   d. Have basis for further improvements as UST prepares for the new normal this coming AY 2020-21.
	
	5. Allow the Committee, led by Dean Marcelo, to take charge of the details of its implementation, <u>subject to and consistent with University policies</u>. Such details may include, but are not limited to, the following:
	   a. Seeking the best possible promo plan that students may avail of, e.g. freebies for students vis-à-vis number of subscribers;
		Legal Counsel
		
		Effective immediately

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b. Coordinating with the UST legal counsel for the applicable MOA between UST and the Telcos;

c. Conducting an orientation with student leaders to:
  - Set realistic expectations;
  - Explain clearly the possible advantages, as well as disadvantages, of the package, if any;
  - Address directly students' queries and clarifications.

d. Preparing related communications such as announcements for students;

e. Coordinating with other academic or administrative units on any related matter.

6. Academic units can submit a list of students who can be prioritized, particularly those that have been identified to have no internet access at all.

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The Committee shall continue with its initiatives and come up with a long-term plan/proposal to improve the technical aspects of online learning in the University as well as address issues related to the Data Privacy Act.

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The cooperation of everyone in this endeavor is highly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Fr. Jesus M. Miranda, Jr., O.P.
Secretary-General