

SDG 5 - Creating a Culture of Equity: UST's Gender-Inclusive Milestones

The University of Santo Tomas (UST), guided by the leadership of Rev. Fr. Richard Ang, O.P., has consistently embraced the principles of inclusivity and gender equality in its academic and institutional growth. As UST enters its future under the banner of Vision 2028, Fr. Ang's plan integrates gender equality as a vital component of its roadmap, which envisions a robust educational landscape bolstered by research, innovation, and community collaboration. This narrative report evaluates how UST's recent developments and strategic goals, as outlined in the Vision 2028 agenda and other institutional advancements, promote gender equality.

1. Fr. Ang's Vision 2028: A Commitment to Gender Equality

Fr. Richard Ang's Vision 2028 is a comprehensive agenda aimed at elevating UST's academic and research profile while ensuring its transformation into a modern, globally competitive institution. The agenda highlights key priorities that align with the promotion of gender equality, ensuring UST fosters a culture of diversity and inclusivity:

1.1. Enriched Academic Research and Service Quality

Central to Vision 2028 is the goal of enriching academic research. The Rector's plan stresses the need for interdisciplinary research, an approach that allows gender studies to flourish. UST encourages its faculty and researchers to address critical gender issues, including social justice, women's rights, gender-based violence, and health, within their scholarly pursuits. Furthermore, research output is expected to increase, with a focus on projects that serve societal needs, including the advancement of gender equality and inclusivity.

1.1.1. [Championing Women in Sports: Lady Jin Tachiana Kezhia Mangin's Historic Win](#)

On October 4, 2024, Grade 12 STEM student Tachiana Kezhia Mangin brought immense pride to UST and the Philippines by capturing the gold medal in the 2024 World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea. As the first Filipina to achieve this feat in 28 years, Mangin's victory symbolizes the empowerment of young women in sports, a traditionally male-dominated arena.

Mangin's triumph underscores the university's dedication to fostering an inclusive environment where student-athletes, regardless of gender, can thrive and reach their full potential. Her achievement not only inspires future Thomasians but also challenges stereotypes, proving that women excel in every field they pursue.

1.1.2. [Language and Gender Equality: Insights from the HERSTORY Webinar](#)

The UST English Language Studies Society (ELSSOC) hosted the webinar “HERSTORY: Inquiries on Language and Gender Construction” on March 15, 2022, to celebrate International Women's Month. The event focused on how language perpetuates gender inequality and explored ways to promote gender inclusivity. Speakers included Senator Risa Hontiveros, who advocated for marginalized groups, and Dr. Joey Andrew Lucido Santos, who analyzed the experiences of transgender women in a heteronormative culture.

The webinar also featured Dr. Lalaine F. Yanilla-Aquino, who discussed the role of gender representation in education, and Dr. Aileen Salonga, who encouraged challenging gender norms. The event, organized by ELSSOC President Marianne M. Manalo and Auditor Mary Caryl O. Lozano, concluded with a call to support leaders who uplift marginalized voices and use language to challenge patriarchy and promote gender equality.

1.2. Enhanced Student Welfare Services

One of the core pillars of Fr. Ang’s plan is the enhancement of student welfare services, with a particular emphasis on supporting all students’ mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Recognizing the challenges that students face due to gender, UST is committed to ensuring that both female and male students, as well as those of diverse gender identities, receive equal opportunities and support. Policies on student organizations, case investigations, and student welfare will be reviewed to ensure they are responsive to gender issues, providing a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

1.2.1. [Empowering Women in Male-Dominated Fields](#)

The UST Association of Civil Engineering Students (ACES) exemplified gender advocacy through its webinar “From the Concrete Up: Women in Engineering.” The event highlighted the struggles and achievements of women in engineering, a field traditionally dominated by men.

Featuring inspiring talks from women professionals, the webinar aimed to encourage female students to pursue careers in engineering, breaking barriers and promoting workplace diversity.

1.2.2. [Policies Addressing Gender-Based Harassment](#)

UST has taken a proactive stance in combating gender-based sexual harassment by implementing comprehensive policies that define and penalize inappropriate behaviors. The university's guidelines explicitly address acts such as catcalling, cyberstalking, homophobic remarks, and physical harassment, ensuring the safety and dignity of all community members.

These policies reflect UST's zero-tolerance approach toward discrimination and harassment, fostering an environment where individuals, regardless of gender, feel secure and valued.

1.3. Government and Industry Collaboration

Fr. Ang has emphasized the importance of collaboration with external partners, including government units and industry leaders. In the context of gender equality, these partnerships can help expand UST's outreach programs to address gender disparities in the workforce, health, and education. Government and industry partnerships can also serve as a platform to foster gender-sensitive policies, ensuring that the university's initiatives on gender equality resonate across sectors.

1.3.1. Gender Empowerment through Education and Advocacy

UST's strong partnership with international institutions like UNESCO highlights its global leadership in promoting gender equality. The International Conference on Gender, Adult Literacy, and Active Citizenship for Social Transformation (GALACST) showcased the university's commitment to addressing gender issues through education.

With themes such as "Literacies, Gender Equality, and Active Citizenship as Pathways to Empowerment and Social Transformation," the event engaged educators, policymakers, and advocates in dialogues on achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This conference solidified UST's reputation as a hub for gender discourse, fostering collaboration across disciplines to achieve equity.

1.3.2. Health Advocacy: Women's Well-being at the Forefront

UST has consistently addressed gender-specific health issues through targeted projects such as RAConsulta: Tackling Women's Health and Wellbeing and BABEL 2.0: Transforming Communities by Nurturance of Women's Health. This inclusive programs of UST uplift women and families.

These initiatives focus on improving health education and services for women, particularly in disadvantaged communities, by:

1. Promoting awareness of reproductive health and family planning.
2. Reducing stigma around menstruation and postpartum care.
3. Ensuring equitable access to health services.

