



Press Release

November 22, 2018

CHED Chief to Rep. Salceda: “I take his comments very seriously; he may not have up-to-date information on implementation of RA10931”

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Board Chairman J. Prospero E. De Vera III announced on Friday that the implementation of RA 10931 or the *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act* is in full swing.

This clarification is issued in response to news items published on several online portals quoting Rep. Joey Salceda as decrying “the ‘stupid’ implementation of free college education law,” alleging among others: (1) the slow reimbursements of the tuition and miscellaneous fees claims of public universities and colleges; (2) that UniFAST’s wants to control the FHE budget instead of giving it directly to State Universities and Colleges (SUCs); (3) no policy issued on the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) and failure to award grants to eligible beneficiaries; (4) that the National Student Loan program has not been implemented at all; and (5) that students should be reimbursed for any payment made in line with the Return Service System.

“I have the highest regard and respect for Representative Joey Salceda who championed the passage of RA 10931 that is why I take his comments very seriously. However, he may not have gotten up-to-date information on UniFAST’s implementation of the programs”, said de Vera.

Chairman De Vera sheds light on each of the allegations above-mentioned:

1. Contrary to the claim of Rep. Salceda that only 9 SUCs have received their reimbursements, CHED-UniFAST data shows that 62 SUCs and CHED-recognized Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) have completed billing amounting to P3,227,556,829.30 as of October 2018. The reimbursement claims of additional 77 SUCs and LUCs have are now being processed and by November 30, 2018, 180 of the 188 SUCs/LUCs would be able to get their reimbursements.

CHED-UniFAST was able to reimburse the claims of all SUCs in AY 2017-2018 under the P8B Free Tuition 2017 program. Our track record speaks for itself. There is no reason why we cannot do the same for this year, added de Vera.

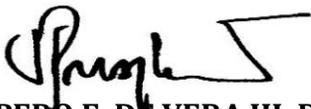
2. I have always supported the position of Rep. Salceda that the reimbursement of tuition and miscellaneous fees should be part of the GAA of SUCs/LUCS instead of

putting it in the CHED/UNIFAST budget. But this is difficult to do under the proposed 2019 National Expenditure Program (NEP) because of existing fiscal and accounting requirements such as the proposed Cash Based Budgeting system. The SUCs themselves prefer the current reimbursement method. CHED is thankful that Congress has included the CHED-submitted special provisions to correct these legal constraints in the House approved version of the 2019 NEP. We hope that this major reform can be done, with the help of Rep. Salceda, when Congress tackles the 2020 NEP.

3. Insofar as the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) program is concerned, the TES guidelines were issued in July and 1,722 public and private HEIs submitted 1.13 million names of applicants for the 300,000 available slots.

Some 13,760 Expanded Students' Grants-in-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation (ESGP-PA) continuing scholars in 55 SUCs are already receiving their TES stipends. Another 163,529 poor but deserving students in public and private HEIs and 77,424 students in private universities with no SUC/LUCs will qualify for TES subsidy as soon as their universities complete the submission of requirements. RA 10931 will also provide additional TES subsidy to some 1,649 persons with disabilities who are currently enrolled in qualified HEIs.

4. Student loan programs have been problematic in the Philippines. The Study-Now Pay Later program was a failure and it became a Study-Now-Pay-Never program. We need to design a better loan system to make sure public funds are accounted for. This is the reason why the UniFAST Governing Board approved only short-term loans for this year. This will be expanded next year.
5. On the Return Service System, no fees were collected from students for Return Service, so there are no reimbursements to be made.



J. PROSPERO E. DE VERA III, DPA
Chairman, Commission on Higher Education
Governing Board Chair, UniFAST