

The University of Southern Mindanao (USM) is a premier land grant university in Southern Philippines. Formerly known as the Mindanao Institute of Technology (MIT), the USM was founded by the late Bai Hadja Fatima Matabay Plang, a dedicated Muslim educator and philanthropist. Formally starting its operations on October 1, 1954, the USM achieved its university status through P.D. 1312 on March 13, 1978.

USM is one of the four leading state universities in the country that achieved excellence in agricultural education. Today, it is one of the nine among 120 or so state-owned universities and colleges (SUCs) that earned Level IV status. In the first half of 2005, it was rated very satisfactory by the Department of Budget and Management Regional Office XII using the same instrument as that used in the level accreditation process.

USM has a total of 5, 129.97 hectares: Kabacan main campus has 1, 024 hectares; Arakan Valley campus, 4,091 hectares; and USM-Kidapawan City Campus, 14.97 hectares. Most of its land is used for agricultural projects.

For five decades now, USM has produced marketable graduates who have distinguished themselves with these marks: leadership, industry, and dedication to work. Until today, the university continues to instill the value of academic excellence and hard work among its students.

The University maintains an enviable track record of producing topnotchers and passers of various board examinations. It has gained international reputation in educating the youths that excel in skills competitions and in motivating its faculty and staff to lead in various fields of research. Ever pioneering and adventurous, USM will continue to provide educational leadership not only in the region but also nationwide. Innovative, research-driven, flexible, relevant, and very entrepreneurial----that's USM at the age of 50 and beyond.

## **History**

The USM main campus used to be a rubber plantation owned and managed by a Scott named Mr. Fleming, who was granted an area of 1, 024 hectares in 1909. The ownership changed hands several times until the Japanese occupation, when it came under the control of Ohta Development Company. After the Americans defeated the Japanese in 1944, this compound was taken over by the United States government until it was transferred to the Philippine government in 1947. It was not until the 1950's that a respected Maguindanao princess, Bai

Matabay Plang, started the move to establish the Mindanao Institute of Technology (MIT) with the rubber plantation areas as the proposed location. She was supported in this venture by Datu Udtog Matalam, the governor then of the Empire Province of Cotabato, together with Congressman and later House Speaker Salipada Pendatun of the same Province.

With President Elpidio Quirino's signing on June 20, 1952 the R.A 763, the law creating the MIT, Bai Matabay Plang became more inspired to establish a state college in Southern Mindanao. On June 10, 1954, Pres. Ramon Magsaysay signed the Republic Act No. 998 the enabling act for the establishment and subsequent operation for MIT which got initial allocation of P 200, 000 for the school's operation.

On March 13, 1978, President Ferdinand E. Marcos signed the Presidential Decree No. 1312 which converted the MIT into a University with Dr. Jaman S. Imlan as the first University President. As University, the USM functions were mandated to have a trilogy of functions: instruction, research, and extension. The three functions later expanded to four (instruction, research, extension, and resource generation).

### **Four-Fold Functions**

As the University's major function, instruction is carried out by almost 500 faculty members most of whom have either a master's or doctoral degree and hold professional ranks.

### **Instruction**

Instruction is provided for tertiary and advanced education levels which offer a variety of courses and fields of specialization. In addition, the University maintains laboratory schools for elementary and high school for its teacher education degrees.

### **Research**

To compliment institution, research comes as another major function of the University. Research activities are mostly carried out by its research arms: the University of Southern Mindanao Agricultural Research Center (USMARC) and the Philippine Industrial Crops Research Institute (PICRI). USMARC is the national research center for corn, sorghum, and fruit crops; the regional center for rice and other cereals, livestock and farming systems, water resources, applied rural sociology, cutflowers, and ornamental plants; and a cooperating station for coconut and vegetable crops. PICRI, on the other hand, is the national research institute for rubber, fiber crops, coffee, spices, cacao, and other industrial crops. Attached to PICRI is the Philippine Rubber Testing Center (PRTC), a testing center for dried natural rubber. USM also

hosts two organized bodies which do research and development activities: the Cotabato Agricultural and Resources Research and Development Consortium (CARRDEC), a research consortium of various agencies in Central Mindanao and the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), a member of the national PCC network.

**Extension**

Coordinated by the University's Extension Office, extension work is carried out by the different colleges and research units either on their own or in collaboration with other government agencies as well as private organizations. Provision of extension service takes the form of trainings on various subject areas for different clientele groups most of whom are farmers, technical assistance to various sectors, social laboratory projects, demonstration farms, consultancy services and public education through personal contacts and the mass media: radio, print, and video.

**Resource Generation**

Effectively operated and managed, the University's resource generation program generates a sizeable income to augment the operating fund of the University and to serve as laboratory for horticulture, animal science, agronomy, and agribusiness majors. Among its projects are: rice, corn; buffalo, cattle and sheep; swine; poultry; durian, lanzones, mango, calamansi and other citrus fruits, coconut, banana, marang, guyabano, rambutan, and pineapple, to name some. The USM is noted for its OPV corn seeds and quality grafted/budded seedlings of various fruit and plantation crops.

**Path to Maturity**

The dream of establishing a "technological institution" in Mindanao was realized with the opening of the Mindanao Institute of Technology (MIT), now the University of Southern Mindanao (USM), on October 1, 1954, USM was conceived with the objective of providing the youths and adults of Mindanao and nearby Visayan provinces the opportunity to train in agriculture, industry, and homemaking.

**From conception to infancy**

The University of Southern Mindanao was considered the brain child of a great Muslim woman leader and educator, the late Hadja Bai Fatima Matabay PLang, who worked hard against many odds for the approval of RA 763 creating MIT. It was through her strong and inspiring leadership with the unwavering support of the political stalwarts of the said period, notably the late Datu Salipada K. Pendatun and Datu Udtog Matalam, that the plan of having a state college in Southern Mindanao became brighter with the enactment and approval of RA 763 on June 20, 1952.

On June 10, 1954, the Congress of the Philippines approved a bill known as Republic Act No. 998. This law is considered as the enabling act for the establishment and subsequent operation of MIT after it was signed by then President Ramon Magsaysay. The MIT formally started its operation as a state college on October 1, 1954 with Prof. Emetrio Asinas as the MIT President.

As a newborn academic institution , MIT started with a core of 31 employees who operated on a slim budget of P200,000 for the SY 1954 – 1955. This appropriated amount was for the establishment, maintenance and operation of the Institute for the said school year.

Having its own of birthpains during the conception stage, MIT started offering collegiate courses after almost one year since its formal opening. MIT began with only three degree offerings: BS in Agriculture, BS in Home Technology, and BS in Industrial Arts. During that time, the Institute barely had the facilities for learning. Expectedly, some classes had to be held under the acacia trees. Students had no place to study their lessons the vacant time. They had to stay under the trees in sunny weather and had to crowd in the few rooms available when bad weather came. Nor was there any faculty room where the teachers could study or rest.

The Library nestled on a small nook – two by three and one-half meters -- on the ground floor under the former high school building. Textbooks, references, and home reading books were very inadequate. In some classes, only one textbook was available -- only that of the professor or instructor.

No infirmary was available for ailing students and personnel. A temporary medical clinic has been located in a poorly – ventilated or poorly lighted room with very limited medical supplies and equipment.

An intense housing problem also plagued both the students and the faculty during the early years. There was no dormitory for either boys or girls. Some students had to construct their own cottages (makeshift materials) in the Student Barrio through the help of their parents. Other students found their way in the homes of many hospitable Kabacan families. Faculty cottages were limited and several families had to compete for them. The USM President had to constantly urge his faculty and staff to construct their own houses or cottages out of their personal fund. In addition, light was not provided to student cottages and was only available to faculty cottages at 6:00 – 9:30 in the evening. Only one bulb per house was allowed to most cottages.

Under the dynamic leadership of President Emeterio Asinas, he was able to empower the faculty and staff as well as the students to incessantly work for the development of the college. In this three years of pioneering work, physical development was given emphasis. Hence, building construction during his administration included the agronomy building (which became the nucleus of the College of Agriculture Building); the Science building, now renovated to house the College of Education; Ardex Building, burned in the late 1980s, which later on was given the DECS (USM Annex Elementary School); Home Economics Building; Women's Dormitory; and some faculty cottages, President's Cottage, and the two initial Trade buildings and machinery shed and shops.

## **Developing towards maturity**

USM's growth and development has been phenomenal in the succeeding years. The trilogy functions of instruction, research and extension were especially given emphasis under the administration of the second MIT President Dominador D. Clemente, from 1958 to 1975. It was also during this period that faculty development became a centerpiece program of the administration to ensure quality instruction and effective research and extension services. UNESCO-UNDP special program, the agricultural training program of USM through faculty scholarship and the acquisition of books and laboratory equipment in 1965 was all the more strengthened.

Curricular offerings were also reviewed. Additional programs were introduced which led to restructuring of the MIT's organizational set-up in the seventies. The existing departments were

elevated into Colleges, namely: 1) Agriculture, 2) Arts and Sciences (formerly General Education Department), 3) Education, 4) Engineering, 5) Home economics, and 6) Trades and Industries.

A major breakthrough during this period was the Institute's linkages with the Philippine Council for Agriculture Resources Research and Development Consortium (PCARRD). The Institute under the leadership of its third President, Dr. Jaman Imlan was able to request PCARRD, with financial assistance from USAID, to fund the establishment of Southern Mindanao Agricultural Research Center (now USMARC) on January 26, 1976. its operation paved the way for the establishment of various infrastructure projects in the University campus, including housing units for faculty and researchers, and moreover, the pouring in of resources for training, scholarship and research and extension activities among its faculty and staff.

***("Path to Maturity": Information and data were taken from the 1955-2000 USM annual reports and personal interview with USM pioneers)***

### **The USM Code**

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