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# RESPONSE FROM THE AWARDEES

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**Dr. Emilia Patricia P. Tirador-Zarco**  
*WVSU-COM Outstanding Alumni for Research*

Good evening everyone. I am glad to be here with you all. It feels good to be home!

I am deeply honoured to receive the Outstanding Alumni Research award and even more to be chosen to give the response to the Outstanding Alumni Awards on behalf of my fellow awardees. When I was asked to give a 10-15 minute speech – I was honestly scared – because I wasn't sure what to say, especially that I left clinical practice 25 years ago. But Celina gave me the directions, thank you Celina.

I would like to share with you my reflections...

Tonight we gathered here to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Ruby Anniversary, with the theme, "Splendid Memories, Magnificent Dreams". For all of you who are here, we took the time to pause from our day-to-day routine, to reconnect with each other, to honor our achievements and perhaps to gain inspiration as we move on with life.

Reconnection makes us young and creates that wonderful feeling of nostalgia. This brings memories of the way things were and the happiness associated with them. Seeing our old friends, our teachers and our mentors allow us to see the world in a new light and remind us of the person we once were. As life seemingly becomes more complex with time and as we become more independent with age, reconnection allows us to better judge the person that we have become – maybe some of us lost track at some time, maybe some of us have grown wiser – but either way it's good to know. Yes, we have splendid memories to share that give meaning to who we are and what we have become.

I like how we identified the alumni awards because they recognize the culmination of our journey not only as physicians collectively but as individuals with unique skills and talents beyond clinical practice. When I arrived yesterday and was thinking about what to say tonight, I asked Louie, do we have core values as a college of medicine? We can't remember if we have, but the awards tonight is a beautiful framework of what is expected of us and how we were trained as physicians.

The **outstanding work in the academe award** signifies our value on medical education – the foundation of our preparation as medical practitioners.

With advances in technology and globalization, knowledge is expanding faster than our ability to assimilate and apply it effectively. It was estimated that the doubling time of medical knowledge in 1950 was 50 years, in 1980 it was 7 years, in 2010, it became 3.5 years. In 2020, it is projected to be 0.2 years – just 73 days. This implies that what was learned in the first three years of medical school will just be 6% of what is known at the end of the decade from 2010 to 2020. Medical schools are constantly challenged to redesigning curriculum and address this perception that there is a growing disconnection in the delivery of medical education.

When I looked back at our training then, I am proud to say that our approach of both addressing content (delivery of knowledge) and process (development of skills) has prepared me to succeed in clinical practice (in my work in UP-PGH then) and in my work in the academe as both professor and administrator which started at UP Diliman moving to Southeastern Louisiana University and now at Adelphi University in New York. I can still remember Dr. Demetrio, our teacher's introduction to histology. She said that the skills that we develop in learning the content of histology from our textbook, the connections of knowledge, the organizational skills, the perseverance are just as critical in our success as a doctor down the road.

The **outstanding work in community service** signifies our commitment to the community that we serve and living up to West Visayas State University's core value of service. It reminds us to constantly align our medical curriculum with the health needs of the community. In the US, and more or less here, approximately 80% of clinical education occurs in in-patient settings, yet 80-90% of medicine is practiced in the out-patient arena. My experiences in our Preventive and Community Medicine program (our PCM) in San Enrique and Pavia provided us with a wealth of hands-on training where we develop our people skills in the context of physician-patient relationships. These are "crucial conversations" that easily transferred to other context and made us better communicators.

The **outstanding work in government service** signifies our value in partnering with our governing bodies. We need to cultivate a strong relationship with our government and collaborate to ensure that health is among the top agenda of our government strategic plans. This is critical as we work to achieve economic progress and strive to sustain it. I remembered WVSU and our Order of Asclepius partnering with local governments in the northern towns of Iloilo to render primary care and circumcision missions.

The **outstanding work in clinical practice** reflects our commitment to excellence, one of our university's core values. As a pioneer medical school in Western Visayas and the 2<sup>nd</sup> state owned medical school in the country, we have produced around 2,000 licensed physicians during the past 40 years. Most of us served as physicians all over the country, several as leading specialists and subspecialists in various fields of medical practice. I am proud to note that we

were the first batch to use Governor Benito Lopez Memorial Hospital for a full year and it was during our time when the School of Medicine became the College of Medicine and Benito Lopez Hospital was renamed the West Visayas State University Hospital. That was one splendid memory indeed!!!

And finally, the **outstanding work in research** reflects our commitment to contribute new knowledge and to advance evidence-based practice. There are numerous opportunities to participate in laboratory research, clinical trials and population research all over the world. Moreover, research as a process has expanded beyond the experimental method. The best research studies are a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches that adds new knowledge to improve practice. As early as first year, I remembered our research project on breastfeeding practices among mothers in Rahman Nava's neighborhood. It was a small research project – but that was my first experience as a researcher in the field. I will be happy to help start a health research program if given the opportunity. Thank you for honouring my research work in the areas of public health, health promotion and education.

Let me share with you a little more about myself...

After graduation and passing the medical board, I wanted to pursue Obstetrics and Gynecology but was unable to get residency because I was underboard – at that time, it took six (6) months before the results of the board examination was released. I was however accepted at the UP-PGH for a residency in Anaesthesia. On my first year, PGH went on a medical-surgical mission to Guimaras and I was chosen to go as the resident anaesthesiologist with a consultant. The medical-surgical mission was one of my most memorable moments as an anaesthesiologist where we performed an anterior neck dissection, six thyroidectomies, and more than 10 herniorrhaphies in two days. On my second year, I left my residency training after getting married and having our 1<sup>st</sup> child, Toby. I was full time mother in the next two years and decided to teach at the University of the Philippines – Department of Health Education in Diliman while completing a Masters in Education in Health Education. I had my second child Michelle while I was at UP. Teaching in UP Diliman was probably the most fulfilling in my teaching career – during the seven years that I taught there – I actually inspired our student to proceed to medicine and other health related careers. Today I have students in WHO, doctors and teachers in both the Philippines and the United States.

I was first invited to teach a summer course at the University of Idaho where I was encouraged by a colleague to apply for university teaching jobs rather than enrol in a PhD program in Health Education. The following year, I started teaching at Southeastern Louisiana University. My background as an MD and Masters in Health Education, and university teaching was attractive to the university. Louisiana is the second “poorest” state in the US and very much like the Philippines. But being poor had its advantages – the university and the state was a recipient of



several grants and financial aid programs addressing public health concerns. I co-managed several of these grants and programs that brought together the state department of education, public health, and higher education.

I moved to New York to be with family (my brother lives there) and for my husband to go back to school as a respiratory therapist. Adelphi University is a private university in Long Island that was just recovering from a corrupt presidency. It was good to start working with the new president who had a vision and a department chair who was a leader in the field of Physical Education. Interestingly, I learned that the American Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance was born in this small university and founded by a physician, Dr. William Anderson. My previous work in the Philippines and Louisiana both as a physician and health educator was given credit and in five years, I gained tenure. In another five years, I became Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the School of Education. When the chair of our Health and Physical Education Department retired, I was asked to come home to our department and that's where I am now – the chair of the department.

I could not have achieved the work I have done without the support and love of my family, friends, classmates, teachers, mentors, and Our Lord above. Today is also the time to acknowledge their contribution. Thank you very much. It takes a village to raise a child. West Visayas State University College of Medicine is an important part of that village. And I am your happy child coming home.