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WVSU Cafeteria's Catering Services: Happy Tummy or Not?

The crowd gathered in the lobby. The ribbon was cut and the guests applauded. The new Research and Extension Building was officially open. On the second floor, the buffet tables were set. The ushers and usherettes, who were Research and Extension staff, guided everyone to partake of the food served on the two long buffet tables.

As Prof. Jenny C. Calabio made his way to the buffet tables, he saw the staff member in charge of food frowning while she walked between queues of hungry guests. *"Sir Jenny,"* she said as she approached him, *"ano man ni obra sang Hometel man? Indi gid ya manani ah! Maestorya gid ko ni sa imo pagkatapos."* ("Sir Jenny, what kind of service of the Hometelⁱ staff is this? This is not good! I really have to talk to you after this!")

With a worried face, Calabio checked on the buffet tables and saw that the covers were the usual red, curtain-like, ready-made skirts that had already seen more than a hundred building openings and inaugurations. The length of the cloths was too long for the height of the tables. In fact, they were touching the floor. He further saw that the vegetable salad in a large stainless steel mixing bowl had a serving spoon in it (not even a pair of tongs to handle the torn lettuce leaves, julienned carrots, and round cucumber slices). Moreover, the staff replenishing the food were not wearing their uniforms. The HRMⁱⁱ

ⁱ Hometel is the common term used by faculty, staff, and students of WVSU to refer to the University Hometel and Cafeteria
ⁱⁱ HRM stands for Hotel and Restaurant Management, a four-year bachelor's program offered at WVSU

students, who were requested to help at such occasions, looked much better when they wore their uniform white polo shirt and black pants with their hair in a bun, complete with hairnets.

Yet for Calabio, who was the URGPⁱⁱⁱ Director overseeing the University Homotel and Cafeteria, this situation was not new; it was just one of the many complaints brought to his attention during the events and functions in which the University Cafeteria provided food services.

As he walked back to his car to return to the URGP office, his thoughts lingered on the many complaints and negative feedback he had received as director. A number of them were from the clients of the University Cafeteria during catering functions. How could he improve the catering services of the cafeteria, he wondered to himself, to make clients happy and satisfied? Where should his efforts go when it comes to training and tooling his cafeteria staff?

Background on the University Cafeteria and URGP

The University Cafeteria was established as per BOR^{iv} Resolution No. 54-2007 to cater to the needs of the academic community to have a clean eating place that served quality food and provided quality service at a reasonable and affordable price. The Cafeteria was located on the ground floor of the Homotel and was envisioned to serve the students, faculty, staff, guests, special functions of the Homotel, residents of the dormitory, and outside customers. The cafeteria could accommodate about 100 persons.¹

For catering services, all university functions were to be catered by the cafeteria through the transfer of fund scheme, except when the Homotel and Cafeteria Manager certified that the function could not be served due to the big volume and numbers of caterings during the scheduled day and the functions fell on a weekend/holiday and there was less than a Php5,000 (\$100.04)^v budget.²

The Cafeteria was under the University Resource Generation Program, of which Calabio was the director. This unit was created through the enactment of Republic Act 8292, also known as the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1987. RA 8292 authorized State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to use income from tuition fees, other school charges, and generate income and become self-sufficient, as a response to the national government's move withdrawing the capital outlay (CO) and to gradually withdraw its maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE). Ultimately, SUCs were to operate as a corporate entity, optimally managing their fiscal resources, maximizing income, and operating efficiently at lowest possible cost without sacrificing their ability to provide quality education and attaining their goals and objectives.³

Table 1 shows the number of personnel of the University Homotel and Cafeteria, their position, and their employment status.⁴

iii URGP is the University Resource Generation Program, the income-generating unit of the University where the Homotel and Cafeteria is under

iv BOR is the Board of Regents, the body upon whom the governance of the University is vested.

v The exchange rate as of January 19, 2016 was 1 US\$ = Php 49.98.

Table 1
Hometel and Cafeteria Personnel

Number	Position	Status
1	Manager	Casual ^{vi}
1	Houseparent (and Cafeteria Cashier)	Permanent ^{vii}
1	Cook	Job Order ^{viii}
2	Server/Dishwasher	Job Order
1	Marketer/Purchaser	Job Order
2	Utility	Job Order
1	Student Assistant	Hourly Rate ^{ix}

The following were the respective functions of each position:

Manager. The manager was responsible for directing and overseeing the day to day management, maintenance and administration of University Hometel and Cafeteria; planning and developing strategies for generating revenue and resources for the University Hometel and Cafeteria in line with the Business Plan of the University and URGP; serving as a contract negotiator and administrator of agreements for food catering services, kiosk occupants, convenience stores and other related services for the University; developing and managing an annual budget for the unit and performing periodic cost productivity analysis; assisting the internship/practicum coordinators in the use of facilities by the students; evaluating and monitoring employee performance and training; and performing miscellaneous and job-related duties as assigned.

Houseparent and Cashier-Cafeteria. He/she was tasked to perform cashiering at the cafeteria; take care of the Hometel residents/transients/guests; receive and record the reservations and bookings of transients; issue receipts of payment of transients/guests; look after the health and other needs of the Hometel residents/transients; maintain cleanliness and sanitation of Hometel facilities; implement Hometel rules and regulations; ensure the safety and security of the residents' quarters; assist and supervise the food at the Cafeteria and catering functions; keep the financial records of the Hometel and Cafeteria; submit required reports; and do related work.

Cook. The cook took charge of organizing the kitchen and planning and preparing the menu and market list; washing and keeping of utensils used in the kitchen; assisting in serving food when needed; and maintaining the cleanliness of the kitchen area.

Server/Dishwasher. The server/dishwasher was in charge of transporting and delivering food items and catering supplies to sites of catered functions; collecting, segregating and washing soiled dishes and utensils used in the kitchen; wiping and drying utensils and sterilizing them for ready use; clearing tables and returning dishes and utensils to the kitchen; and assisting in setting the cafeteria or the venue for catered functions.

Marketer/Purchaser. The marketer/purchaser was responsible for buying and storing of food supplies; assisting the cook in food preparation; assisting in serving food at the Cafeteria and

vi Casual is the employment status issued only for essential and necessary services when there are not enough regular staff to meet the demands of the service

vii Permanent is the employment status issued to a person who meets all the minimum qualification requirements of the position to which he is being appointed, including the appropriate eligibility prescribed, in accordance with the provisions of law, rules and standards promulgated in pursuance thereof.

viii Job Order is the employment covering lump sum work or services such as janitorial, security, or consultancy services where no employer-employee relationship exists.

ix Hourly Rate refers to service rendered by student assistants paid on a per hour basis (Php 25.00 or US\$ 0.50)

catering services when available; displaying stocks and doing inventory of supplies; and monitoring the utensils used in the counter.

Utility. The utility personnel were assigned to maintain the cleanliness of the Cafeteria and Homotel building (offices, rooms, comfort rooms, kitchen and the entire grounds and second floor of the building); to assist in dishwashing, serving, and housekeeping work when available; to assist in the catering services when available (transporting of food and utensils to the venue; assisting in the cafeteria to serve meals and maintain the said area when available; doing skirting of tables during caterings and when needed; attending to the guests' needs and requests; and doing other related work or as requested by the supervisor.

Student Assistant. The student assistant was responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the Homotel and Cafeteria (offices, rooms, comfort rooms, kitchen, and the entire building; assisting in dishwashing, serving, and housekeeping work; assisting in the catering services; assisting the cafeteria in serving meals and maintaining cleanliness of the said area; doing skirting of tables during caterings and when needed; attending to the guests' needs and requests; answering telephone calls and facilitating requests; doing other related work or as requested by the supervisor.⁵

For three years in a row, all personnel of the University Homotel and Cafeteria were evaluated and had a very satisfactory rating (on a 5-level scale: outstanding, very satisfactory, satisfactory, fair, and poor) except for one who staff member was evaluated satisfactory during the year 2016.⁶

Homotel & Cafeteria Bits and Pieces

Of the net income of the Homotel and Cafeteria, 60 percent was returned to the University's share and 40 percent was retained by the URGP, of which 25 percent was for capital build-up, and 15 percent was retained for operations and utilized for paying the salary of its eight personnel, including the student assistant.⁷

The URGP Director was entitled to a cash advance and had the cash bond of Php300,00.00 (USD6,002.40)^x because the current manager was not a regular employee. The liquidation of cash advance was subject to Commission on Audit^{xi} rules and regulations.⁸

When the manager of the University Homotel and Cafeteria transferred to a position having a much higher salary grade two years ago, a new manager -- who was a Hotel and Restaurant Management graduate -- took over. However, he resigned in less than a year to focus on his own restaurant business. The next manager, a commerce graduate, was on her fourth month in the position and was still learning the ropes of the job.⁹

For years leading up to 2016, there had been a plan to make the Homotel and Cafeteria a venue for exposure and practicum of the Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM), Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM), Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), and BSCM (Bachelor of Science in Cooperatives Management) programs of the College of Business and Management (CBM). The operational plan was to be prepared with the CBM faculty and the students leading

x The exchange rate as of January 19, 2017 was 1 USD = Php 49.98.

xi Commission on Audit is the supreme state audit institution of the Philippines, tasked with the audit of all government revenues, resources and other expenditures.

in its operation. There was also the plan to designate a CBM faculty member to be the Homotel and Cafeteria manager in addition to his/her regular teaching load.¹⁰

The present administration had a plan to put up a University Hotel through Public-Private Partnership^{xii} (PPP). This hotel, once operational, would be allowed to provide catering services not only to University clientele but to external clientele as well.¹¹

Competition: The Top Food Caterers in the Country

A number of food caterers in the country topped the list.

Cibo di M was a caterer known for its mouthwatering dishes and elegant settings. Cibo di M had been taking tummies to culinary adventures for over a decade. This catering company had become one of the premier catering companies in the country. As its owner Margarita Forés said, "Cibo's success has always been anchored on its innate understanding and responsive delivery of what you desire."¹²

Chef Jessie. This food caterer was known for gastronomic creativity, an unquenchable thirst for culinary excellence, and having impeccably good taste. Chef Jessie had maintained such a sterling reputation through dedication to the renowned Quality Management System that focused on continuing improvement plans addressing the fast-paced change of customer taste in the industry.¹³

K by Cunanan Catering. Having been in the industry for more than a decade, this food caterer was aesthetically evolving. Countless hours were spent designing mood boards. Plates and cutleries were curated. Decors were remodeled. The staff took time to piece these together to come up with a table that drew attention to the moments that matter. They got as much satisfaction from the design process as they did from execution. The company opened in 2005 as a contemporary catering brand in Manila. They crafted gatherings out of craving, a personality, an imagination and a vision.¹⁴

Catering In and Out of WVSU^{xiii}

Ilonggos^{xiv} were fond of food. This was evidenced by the wide array of catering businesses found in every nook of Iloilo City.^{xv} In La Paz^{xvi} alone, Francisco's and Tony's were situated in just one stretch of the street. Other caterers in Iloilo City that could serve more than 200 guests were Alejandro's, Gleca's Cuisine Catering Services, Montelibano, Afriques, The Venue Function Rooms, Ocean City Seafood & Restaurant, Sun's Pots and Montecillo Canteen and Catering Services. Furthermore, other catering services provided within the University were the food kiosks of the WVSU Multi-Purpose Cooperative. The cafeteria often had catering services during official functions of the University, such as meetings, conferences, assemblies, and the like.

A Closer Look at Calabio

Calabio had joined WVSU in the year 2000. He was assigned as IGP (Income Generating Project) Manager in 2002. In 2003, he was designated as URGP Director. After four years, a number of directors were assigned until Calabio returned in 2011 and assumed the post up to the present.¹⁵

xii PPP is a partnership scheme generally defined as a contractual arrangement between government and the private sector to deliver public infrastructure and/or public services.

xiii WVSU stands for West Visayas State University, a state-owned higher education institution located on Luna Street, La Paz, Iloilo City, Philippines.

xiv Ilonggos are residents of Iloilo Province and Iloilo City.

xv Iloilo City is a premier capital city of Iloilo Province in Western Visayas Region of the Philippines.

xvi La Paz is one of the Districts in Iloilo City where West Visayas State University is located.

Calabio held a BS in Agriculture and a Master in Agronomy from Central Philippine University (CPU) and University of the Philippines, respectively. He had been with CPU for a year as a faculty member; with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) for almost 13 years as a research assistant; with Jardine Agchem^{xvii} for seven years as technical officer, product development manager, and sales manager; and with Aklan State University (ASU) for more than a year as a research assistant.¹⁶

In 2016, he was part of the College of Business and Management^{xviii} under the Division of Cooperatives Management as faculty. His being URGP Director was a designation with deloading of 9 units.¹⁷

Previous Catering “Glitches”

In 2015, during the training on K to 12 Program^{xix} where the Cafeteria prepared and served food for the teacher trainees, Calabio received a letter from a faculty trainer complaining about the not-good-quality food served during lunch. It was during this time that Calabio reprimanded the Hometel/Cafeteria Manager because the complaint was really put in “black and white.”¹⁸

In addition, during the University Fiesta,^{xx} outside caterers had been hired for four years already because the Cafeteria lacked utensils and equipment to cater to more than 200 persons.¹⁷ The College of Business and Management faculty and HRM students were oftentimes assigned to facilitate this activity.

There were also functions booked at the last minute. These were difficult to manage because the budget for food might not yet be approved by proper authorities but the functions had to be catered the following day.¹⁹

Moreover, a number of past functions relied on HRM students on exposure/practicum to set up and serve because of the limited staff of the Cafeteria. In some cases, there were delayed servings of food when there were several simultaneous catering services going on because of absenteeism of some personnel.²⁰

On Making Tummies Happy

Calabio was troubled that clients for the catering service were getting disappointed and dissatisfied. Supposedly, the on-premise catering services had the big slice in the total income of the University Hometel and Cafeteria. If given the opportunity to improve its services and ultimately grow, it could offer its packages outside the university and could even be on par with other catering businesses in Iloilo City and could also afford off-premise functions.

Calabio wondered, should he review the staffing pattern, revisit the job titles and descriptions, and hire additional manpower, or should he retain the existing number of personnel but conduct intensive staff retraining and retooling? Should the cafeteria continue to operate as a unit under the URGP, or should it be aligned with academics and managed by the College of Business and Management through its Division of Hotel and Restaurant Management and thus no longer be an income-generating unit of the University but a laboratory for the CBM students?

These were the pressing concerns on Calabio's mind. He needed to act quickly to improve the catering services of the Cafeteria and stem the rising series of complaints, but he was in a dilemma about to start.

xvii Jardine Agchem is one of the leading crop protection companies in the Philippines. This company provides Filipino farmers with cost-effective agricultural chemical products and technology to help them fight against destructive pests and diseases

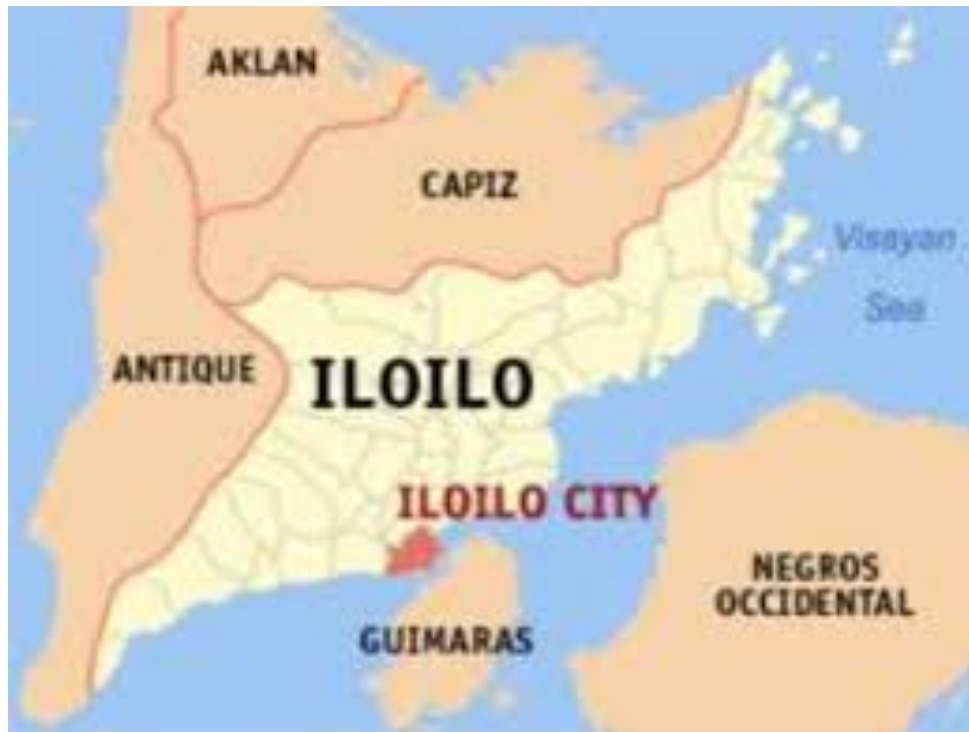
xviii CBM is the newest academic unit at West Visayas State University-Main Campus at La Paz, Iloilo City.

xix K to 12 Program covers kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (6 years of primary education, 4 years of Junior High School, and 2 years of Senior High School).

xx University Fiesta is a campus lunch for all university personnel from all over the WVSU System (main and external campuses and personnel of the WVSU Medical Center) including invited guests and dignitaries which could total to more than a thousand who will share food in a festive mood.

Exhibit A

Map of Western Visayas Showing Iloilo City



Source: pinoy-ofw.com

Exhibit B

West Visayas State University



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Source: http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-n0Jzbd9KeE/TuQM-dTSQ5I/AAAAAAAAADoI/Z6Sz_xGTV0/s1600/WVSU+%25281%2529.jpg

Exhibit C
University Hometel and Cafeteria Building



Source: Ms. Verna Mae A. Lariga 28 Dec. 2016

Exhibit D
Dining Area of the University Cafeteria



Source: Ms. Verna Mae A. Lariga 28 Dec. 2016

Endnotes

- 1 West Visayas State University, University Resource Generation Program, Manual of Operations, 2016
- 2 Ibid.
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- 4 Interview with Prof. Jenny Calabio, URGP Director. 15 Dec. 2016.
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- 12 Cibo di M., "CIBO Story," Accessed 29 Dec. 2016 <<http://www.cibo.ph/story/>>
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- 15 Interview with Prof. Jenny Calabio. 28 Dec. 2016.
- 16 Calabio. 28 Dec. 2016
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Interview with Mrs. Jocelyn Maquiling. Manager, University Hometel and Cafeteria. 28 Dec. 2016.
- 20 Calabio. 28 Dec. 2016