

## Senate prods CHED to implement free tuition law

The Senate passed last Monday a resolution prodding the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to immediately implement Republic Act 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which was signed into law in August last year.

The law institutionalized free tuition in state universities and colleges (SUCs) nationwide, but until now, the CHED has yet to come up with its implementing rules and regulations (IRR) despite sufficient funding.

Senate Resolution 620, sponsored and authored by Sen. Paolo Benigno Aquino IV,

called on government to start implementing RA 10931, by administering and affording the students free tuition and other school fees at the start of the second semester of academic year 2017-2018.

CHED officer-in-charge Prospero De Vera III had earlier said that the agency aims to fully implement the provision of the free tuition and other school fees starting June 2018 for academic year 2018-2019, as the commission is still in the process of finalizing the law's IRR.

According to the resolution, RA 10931, which was signed into law by President Duterte

last Aug. 3, is now in effect and has an approved budget to support its programs, and there is no reason for the CHED not to attend to its immediate implementation.

"The government is duty-bound to enforce the provisions of the law, which should benefit the students whose hope lies in quality, accessible and free tertiary education in order to have a suitable employment to uplift their living conditions," the resolution said.

Congress had already included P8 billion in the General Appropriations Act of 2017 to fund free tuition and P41 billion

to fund the provisions of the law.

Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives panels expressly agreed on the legislative intent to implement the measure by November 2017 or by the second semester of academic year 2017-2018.

The resolution noted that CHED's recent pronouncements ran counter to earlier declarations made by the agency to the Senate during budget deliberations, where senators said existing budgetary allocations were sufficient to cover tuition and other fees "starting the second semester of academic year 2017-2018."

- Paolo Romero

\* COMMISSION ON HIGHER  
EDUCATION (CHED)

\* TUITION FEE