

Change

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(Illustration by Mai Sibayan)



The voice of the CS department returns.

After a two-year hiatus, the UP Parser comes out with its rebirth issue. Borrowing the role of its syntax-analyzer namesake, Parser seeks to examine the multifaceted life in and around CS, to speak the communal ‘language’ that makes each and every one of us ComSci students – a shared love-hate relationship with machine problems, a shared pride in having the toughest subjects in the land, a shared home in this little corner of Melchor Hall. But above all, Parser aims to be there when something goes amiss, to extricate the ‘error’ not because we want to lay blame on someone, but rather to aid in the problem’s solution. This is what a parser does; it is quite the constructive critic in the domain of computer science.

And in what period does Parser find itself trying to fulfill its humble aspirations? We are now in the midst of a slew of changes in CS life – the open source revolution, new department representatives, new curriculum, new faculty, and even an optimistic outlook for the Engineering Cup. But the shift that will arguably touch the concerns – and the pockets – of most CS students would be no other than the impending laboratory fee increase.

In terms of finances, the department has been doing a commendable job walking the tightrope these past years, partly relying on donations of private

entities and multinational companies in an effort to offset the insufficient funding by the UP System, which in turn is a famished, 'subsidized' institution already neglected by the government. This year finds our department desperate to inject new vigor into its educational facilities, a department needing an answer to the silent questions posed by blank monitors and faulty computers, a department yearning to maintain and improve upon one of Engineering's youngest but proudest courses. Ergo, the looming hike in lab fees.

Though other reasons abound for this augmentation, such as the system-wide standardization of all UP lab fees, even a 110 peso-increase per subject would certainly be of great help. Department chair Dr. Ronald Tuñgol himself said that the DCS incurs about half a million pesos in the refurbishment and maintenance of a single room and the computers within. And the department is responsible for more than just one room. Indeed, relief in any form would be welcomed with trumpets and open arms.

But how beneficial the fee supplement may be, this is still an ephemeral solution, a stopgap measure aimed at easing the hunger pains caused by a feeding hand's absence. This new burden on the iskolar ng bayan will not fully solve the woes that the DCS shares with the rest of UP. If any, the forthcoming increase in lab fees only underlines the continuing rising cost of education in the country, exacerbated in part by lack of funding. And though the crux of the problem may lie with the government, endless complaining would not help an administration already beset with a myriad of problems. Again, the students must cope with this change as they have done on many occasions, making sacrifices and hoping for another change to come their way, this time for the better.

After all, change instigates change.