

Assumption University, Thailand

Assumption University (AU) Provides Mental and Spiritual Counseling to Students

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Having been alerted to the threat of the coronavirus since early February of 2020, the Assumption University (AU) of Thailand took immediate steps to mitigate the spread of the virus on its campus by activating to a fuller extent its Online Learning Management System. The system allows video conferencing of faculty members with their respective students on specified time and ensuring that the activity of teaching and learning goes on uninterrupted on an ad-hoc basis. “The full-online learning mode for its degree programs took effect on March 16, 2020 following the recommendation of the Thai Council of University Presidents and such is expected to continue to be implemented during the first semester, June – October 2020”, Dir. Chatelier said. Its students from China and other parts of the world were advised to remain in their home countries and requested to participate in the virtual classes instead.

Sensitive of the difficulties that the students may be experiencing, the university administration extends various forms of assistance. Specifically, to monitor the well-being of its students, the university provides mental and spiritual counseling services to those who need them. Within Academic Units, the Coordinators for Student Services activated online systems of Counseling particularly for two types of students, the international students who were stuck overseas, unable to report back to the University, and for those international students who were in Bangkok, unable to go home. In both cases the strategies carried out were to feed information on updates via the University website, the faculty website, and through the website of the office of International Affairs(www.oia.au.edu). The University’s Department of Student Affairs through its seasoned counselors provided immediate counseling to students via Zoom platforms and through teleconferences. The students, Thai and non-Thai were also offered counseling options through the neighboring Buddhist temples, Christian Churches while the two Chapels on either of the campuses were open all through the day for those who needed to seek silent prayer and spiritual recourse. Characteristic issues which arose among students were fear of isolation during the lockdowns, inertia issues due to lack of exercise, separation from loved ones, and sometimes dietary stress. The University’s Campus Ministers and the Chaplain were ready at all times to react to student calls for either counselling, or advice on faith issues and personal matters.

At the level of the Graduate Schools, the program in Counselling Psychology set up hotlines, and immediate Zoom access for the Graduate students who needed attention. The dialogic value of the interactions between student stress reach-outs and the capacities of the staff and faculty to relate to them during the COVID 19, underscored one of the values of the Catholic identity of Assumption University. The university is indeed “alma mater” particularly when its students are in need or distressed. “We cannot fulfil entirely the students needs but we are there to listen, to cheer up, to empathize, to offer suggestions and possible solutions,” Director Chatelier shared. The University emerges as neighbour, not mere structure, as comfort provider, not, merely



knowledge facilitator. The University is coach, mentor and fellow traveller in the pathways, unseemingly, as they are, in the COVID 19 crisis. University President Rev. Brother Bancha Saenghiran, in the best stroke of the Good Samaritan extended to all Undergraduate enrollees a 25% Scholarship till October 2020, while assuring all Faculty and Staff of equitable emoluments, with no deductions whatsoever.

“Let it not be left unsaid that we prevail in our faith in God our Father, and in Jesus our Lord and Savior to stand with us in these times, and to help us extend our hands of assistance to those who need it in our community and elsewhere,” Director Chatelier said.