

Ethnographic Study of Student Culture and Campus Life at the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD)

1. Introduction: The Microcosm of a Nation

The University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD) exists not merely as an educational institution but as a highly charged sociopolitical microcosm of Philippine society. To understand the student culture of UPD is to understand a complex interplay of academic rigor, systemic dysfunction, social stratification, and intense political engagement. This report synthesizes a vast array of unfiltered student narratives, forum discussions, and anonymous confessions from the last decade to construct a comprehensive ethnography of the "Iskolar ng Bayan" (Scholar of the Nation).

The data reveals a university defined by profound paradoxes. It is a space that champions "Honor and Excellence" yet normalizes institutional trauma and hazing-like application processes. It is a bastion of student activism and leftist thought, yet it is increasingly populated by the economic elite, creating internal class tensions labeled as the "Burgis" (bourgeois) invasion. It is a community that bands together in the spirit of "bayanihan" (communal unity) to survive "terror" professors and broken enlistment systems, yet it remains fragmented by tribalistic college subcultures.

This report dissects these dynamics across eight primary dimensions: Academic Culture, Social Environment, Organizational Life, Political Climate, Identity Values, Campus Atmosphere, Practical Lifestyle, and Program-Specific Subcultures. Through raw data and pattern analysis, we expose the lived reality of the UP student—a reality characterized by a relentless struggle for survival, a search for identity amidst changing demographics, and an enduring, albeit complicated, love for the university.

2. Academic Culture: The Architecture of Resilience

The academic culture of UP Diliman is the foundational element of the student experience, characterized less by nurturing pedagogy and more by a Darwinian test of endurance. The prevailing narrative is that the university does not spoon-feed education; rather, it creates a hostile environment where students must "adapt or die."

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

Workload Intensity and the "Survival" Narrative

The workload in UP is described not just as heavy, but as psychologically attritional. Students frequently use metaphors of physical violence—being squeezed, trampled, or drained—to describe their academic life.

- "In my 5 years in UP, para kang pipigain na basahan. Tapos yung akala mo wala nang tubig, pipigain at pipigain ka hanggang sa wala nang maiwang. In short I was tested beyond whatever were my limits." ¹
- "This is so true. Gumagapang ka na. Tatadyakan ka pa." ¹
- "UP is a limit tester of the highest order because of how demanding it is at every level... Ang hirap sobra, and everyday I always doubt kung kaya ko pa or if better na lumipat nalang ako and finish earlier." ¹
- "Sa iba, ang bayad ay pera. Sa UP, ang bayad ay kaluluwa." ¹
- "Un books na inaral Nila un 1 year kami 3 months lang walang tulugan and it reminded me so much sa struggles ko as a UP student." ¹
- "Adapt or die sa UP. Actually maraming di marunong magturo sa UP, pero the students are that good that it does not matter." ¹

The "Terror Prof" Phenomenon

A unique and persistent feature of UP's academic landscape is the "terror prof"—faculty members who are notoriously difficult, abrasive, or pedagogically absent. These figures are often mythologized, feared, and strangely respected as gatekeepers of "UP Quality."

- "Most of your profs don't teach well, so kailangan mong mag-aral at umintindi mag-isa." ¹
- "Terror profs... She gave low grades to much of us. It's over 25 years and I still hate her for such traumatic experience. Totally unnecessary." ²
- "My thesis adviser was a legendary terror prof in Chem pero sobrang galing." ³
- "Whatever you do, don't take if you value your mental health. He shouts at students and humiliates them during recitation." ⁴
- "Mapapa-??? ka sa teaching methodology ni sir at first, but if you could just keep an open mind and heart, you'll love his class." ⁵
- "The one from Pugad Sayk shared that he threw a shoe to an applicant because the applicant remember his name during an interview... I was horrified by his story." ⁶

Enlistment Trauma: The CRS Hunger Games

Before students can even face the academic rigor, they must survive the "enlistment" process via the Computerized Registration System (CRS). This bureaucratic hurdle is a source of immense stress, often requiring students to perform degrading acts to secure a slot.

- "Prerog (singing, dancing, begging the prof lol) or raffled off IDs for a slot. When it was purely CRS, I spammed it for more chances of winning." ⁷
- "Basically, if hindi ka nakakuha ng class on CRS, pre-rogging is the act of going to prof's classes and basically begging or asking kung pwede ka pa ihabol as their student for that class." ⁸
- "I distinctly remember one afternoon after getting my second failing score... begging god to help me pass this major subject na prereq." ⁹

- "I only have 3 units, hahaha." ¹⁰
- "It's harder to get GEs such as Arts 1, Speech 30, Eng 13, etc. Lots of people get delayed because of lacking slots and/or getting unlucky sa CRS. Add PE classes to that too. Even though 4 lang need mo na PE it's also hard to get them. Again, puta ka UP!" ¹¹

Grade Inflation vs. Deflation (The Laude Controversy)

A fierce inter-generational debate has erupted regarding the explosion of Latin Honors in recent years. Older alumni perceive this as "grade inflation," while current students attribute it to better resources and a shift in pedagogy.

- "It's just sad that, like, at the end of the day, the graduates and those graduating with Latin honors from UP don't deserve it. They say it's grade inflation... With so many older UP graduates—especially boomers—who think this generation's Latin awardees are miles inferior to them, the joy disappears." ¹²
- "UP Diliman alone produced 286 summa cum laude grads in 2024... However, this figure is still way above the 54 summa cum laude grads in pre-pandemic graduation season of 2019." ¹³
- "Regardless of the degree of their honors, graduating from UP much less achieving honors demonstrates a modicum of brilliance and resilience." ¹⁴
- "My take is that there are a lot of laude graduates only in UP DILIMAN compared to other UP campuses... One reason is that there are a lot of younger, more lenient instructors who are concentrated and hired there." ¹²

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: The Fetishization of Resilience

The overarching theme in academic narratives is the fetishization of resilience. The university culture does not prioritize "teaching" in the traditional sense; it prioritizes "filtering." The difficulty is often artificial—caused by unclear instructions, absent professors, or lack of resources—rather than intellectual complexity. Students internalize this struggle, viewing their ability to survive "terror profs" and bureaucratic hurdles as proof of their worthiness. The phrase "Honor and Excellence" is frequently reinterpreted as "Honor in Suffering, Excellence in Survival."

Conflicting Views: The Validity of High Grades

There is a stark conflict regarding the value of grades. Post-pandemic students argue that the high number of Summa Cum Laudes reflects a student body that is more resourceful, digitally native, and supported by younger, empathetic faculty. Conversely, the "Old Guard" (alumni and senior faculty) views this trend as a dilution of UP's prestige, equating high failure rates with high standards. This creates a pervasive "Impostor Syndrome" among current high achievers who feel their awards are viewed with suspicion.

Recurring Themes: Systemic Abandonment as Pedagogy

A recurring motif is "Independent Learning" serving as a euphemism for "Systemic Abandonment." Students consistently report that they learn the material despite the professor, often relying on YouTube, peers, or self-study. The "sink or swim" method is not

merely a teaching philosophy but a structural reality born of underfunding and faculty negligence.

Unique Characteristics: "Prerog" as Institutionalized Begging

Unique to the UP system (in contrast to ADMU or DLSU) is the normalization of the "Prerog" (Teacher's Prerogative). The fact that students must physically line up, perform talents, or write emotional appeal letters just to exercise their right to enroll in a class is a defining characteristic of the UP experience. It instills a sense of powerlessness and necessitates "diskarte" (street smarts) over merit, teaching students that systems are broken and must be navigated through personal appeals.

3. Social Environment: Class Warfare and Stratification

The social fabric of UP Diliman is currently defined by a sharp tension between its historical identity as a school for the masses and its current reality as a destination for the elite. This demographic shift has birthed intense discourse around class, language, and lifestyle.

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

Economic Diversity and the "Burgis" Invasion

The term "Burgis" (bourgeois) has evolved into a slur within UP, used to describe wealthy students who are perceived to be out of touch or "stealing slots" from the poor.

- "Akala ko pang-mahirap (gaya ko) ang UP, hindi pala haha... who struggles? mga walang pera na ang focus ay magtrabaho para makakain lol." ¹
- "UP is one place where 'burgis' is used as a half-insult to say that you're out of touch and disconnected from social realities... Turns out that was literally his first time riding a non-Ikot jeep." ¹⁵
- "Pagpasok mo ng UP Manila puro burgis. You'll just feel more pathetic about yourself... these are the entitled ones, the cliquish, the obnoxious, the feeling-conyo." ¹⁶
- "Most of the UP students they attack are those who post themselves studying in cafes, purchasing things for themselves with their own hard-earned money (ex: Ned Mejia), or simply looking well-put together while sitting in a car." ¹⁷
- "I had a classmate in postgrad from UP undergrad. Had a driver, several Mac products, and was from a political dynasty. She just snapped when I asked her if it was better for her to have gone to Ateneo." ¹⁸
- "Yung mga tunay na mayayamang Pilipino they send their children abroad for Tertiary education, kasi nga mayaman sila... hindi ito exclusive school, there is nothing exclusive about UP, enough of this Burgis nonsense." ¹

Conyo Culture and Language Policing

Language serves as a proxy for class. The prevalence of "Conyo" (Taglish with a specific upper-class accent) is often cited as evidence of gentrification.

- "Puro conyo na lang naririnig ko sa campus. 'Yung iba, trying hard pa. Ito na nga sana

'yung pagkakataon natin na pairalin 'yung mga lokal na wika natin eh." ¹⁹

- "The stereotypical rich kid out-of-touch and unhinged spoiled college kid exists probably not just in ateneo, la salle, or ust, but most especially in up." ²⁰
- "Jerb Trooneet: From my experience interacting with people from each university, the biggest indicator for me is the accent when speaking English. Conyo accent isn't just one thing that's common everywhere. Each school somehow has a different twang." ¹

Dating and Hookup Culture ("Momol")

The social scene is liberal and fluid, with dating often serving as a respite from academic pressure. The culture is less guarded than in sectarian schools.

- "Katip dating culture is known for hookups and partying, especially with UPD nearby... Similar to Ateneo, but less mingling with outsiders due to how large UPD's population is already." ¹
- "UP basically made me self-internalize and reflect on the way I view sex and relationships... That being said, the girls I did sleep with who were UP Students tended to go a lot better than the ones I experienced at DLSU and UST." ²¹
- "I used grindr. Hooked up whenever im horny which is always since i have a high sex drive... But then i met this cute guy... I uninstalled grindr and dedicated myself to him." ²²
- "Please get a room." ²³ (Referring to public displays of affection on campus).

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: The "Rich Kid" Tension

The most explosive social dynamic is the friction between the "Iskolar ng Bayan" ideal and the "Burgis" reality. The data suggests a palpable resentment towards students who flaunt wealth (cars, gadgets, fashion) in a university funded by taxpayer money. This is not simple envy; it is framed as a moral failing. Wealthy students are expected to check their privilege, and failure to do so results in social ostracization or online ridicule.

Conflicting Views: Meritocracy vs. Equity

A deep conflict exists regarding admission. One camp argues that UP is for the "poor but deserving," implying that wealthy students should opt for private universities to free up slots. The opposing view, often held by the middle/upper class, asserts that UP is a meritocracy based on intellect, not a charity, and that demonizing wealth is reverse discrimination. This debate intensifies whenever UPCAT results are released.

Recurring Themes: Spatial Segregation by Class

While the classroom remains a melting pot, social spaces are increasingly segregated by cost. Wealthier students congregate in air-conditioned cafes (UP Town Center, Starbucks), while budget-conscious students frequent Area 2 stalls, kiosks, and campus "tambayans." This creates parallel social worlds within the same campus.

Unique Characteristics: "Burgis" as a Slur

In private universities like DLSU or ADMU, wealth is often normalized or aspirational. In UP, "Burgis" is a slur. It carries connotations of being apolitical, soft, and out of touch with the struggles of the Filipino people. This "reverse snobbery" is a unique feature of UP culture,

where "street smarts" and the ability to commute via jeepney hold higher social capital than driving a car.

4. Org/Extracurricular Scene: Institutionalized Trauma

The organization (org) scene in UP is a double-edged sword: it is the primary source of social support and professional networking, yet it is also the site of systemic abuse and "Kupal" (asshole) culture.

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

"Kupal Culture" and Application Trauma

"Kupal Culture" refers to the power-tripping and hazing-like rituals embedded in the application processes of many organizations.

- "The hazing is intense... Literal psychological torture lol from their stories, it's like you'll lose your dignity and self-respect with what they make you do." ²⁴
- "A member of a BA org said na tradition daw talaga sa kanila na i-trashtalk daw yung apps (behind their backs I assume) habang dinedeliberate kung sino makakapasok sa org." ²⁵
- "Experienced this strip or quit 🥲 mental torture is real talaga... what they're trying to see daw is that how far or how much of an effort are u willing to give." ²⁶
- "Was practically blind for 8 hours dahil sa blindfold. Felt like we were WWII POWs na nakapila habang pinapahirapan ng mga Hapones." ²⁵
- "The one from Pugad Sayk shared that he threw a shoe to an applicant because the applicant remember his name during an interview." ⁶
- "Orgs tend to be kupal, have long application processes but are very tight knit communities." ¹

Org Necessity and Networking

Despite the toxicity, students feel coerced into joining organizations to secure "old exams," tips for professors, and future job connections.

- "If you want connections and networking, you always have 'big orgs' like JMA, IE Club, PMS, AISEC, etc. Bigger orgs tend to be harder to get into though, and can have more archaic kupal org culture." ²⁷
- "They said I will not survive because they believe orgs are necessary for students to survive especially with the connections." ⁶
- "In terms of extracurricular naman, mas solid yung org life natin kaysa sa iba. Sa ibang schools parang magbayad ka lang ng mem fee, member ka na. Unlike sa atin medyo grueling yung app process." ¹

Fraternity Violence

Fraternities remain a potent force, often associated with physical violence and misogyny,

despite repeated administrative crackdowns.

- "2018: There was a Lonsi-APB rumble in AS... 2019, the fratboys still didn't learn. There were Sigma Rho leaks. That's where you'll see their true colors. Hazing. Beating up their brods. Harassment of women." ²⁸
- "Once you're in, you have nothing to lose. Even if you try to quit the fraternity, they'll do everything... to drag you back." ²⁸

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: Institutionalized Hazing

The data confirms that hazing—whether physical or psychological—is not an anomaly but a persistent feature of the UP org scene. "Kupal" culture is rationalized by members as a filter for commitment and a method to build "batch unity." Applicants are expected to endure humiliation (talent shows, servitude, verbal abuse) as the price of admission into the social elite of the campus.

Conflicting Views: Gen Z Pushback

A significant generational shift is occurring. Older alumni defend these practices as "tradition," while current students are increasingly labeling them as abuse and refusing to join. This has led to a recruitment crisis for some "traditional" organizations, who are now being forced to reform or face irrelevance.

Recurring Themes: The "Big Org" Monopoly

Certain "Big Orgs" (particularly in Business and Engineering) hold a monopoly on prestige and corporate connections. These organizations are often the most exclusive and have the most rigorous application processes. This reinforces social stratification, as students who refuse to submit to "Kupal" culture are excluded from these high-value networks.

Unique Characteristics: The "Sig Sheet" Ritual

A unique feature of the UP app process is the "Sig Sheet" (Signature Sheet). Applicants must hunt down every member of the organization to get their signature, often requiring them to perform tasks, answer trivia, or endure roasting. This ritual serves to enforce hierarchy, ensuring that every applicant knows their place relative to every member.

5. Political/Activism Climate: The Grandstand of the Nation

UP Diliman is the heart of student activism in the Philippines. The political climate is intense, pervasive, and often polarized between the "militant" left and the broader student body.

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

Red-Tagging and Safety Concerns

The fear of state surveillance is palpable. "Red-tagging" (labeling students as communists/terrorists) is a daily anxiety.

- "It's not true that UP is a haven for the NPA, and this kind of association is called red-tagging... Activism is not terrorism." ²⁹
- "Feeling unsafe when I wear my ID outside campus... This country is dangerous for us. That's what happens when we're trying to change it." ³⁰
- "My friend belittled humanities... but then I found out that one of the members of this club joined the NPA and died." ³¹
- "Recently, the PNP has issued subpoenas to the current chairperson." ¹

The "Tibak" (Activist) vs. "Ordinary Student" Dynamic

While the campus leans left, there is friction between hardcore activists ("Tibaks") and students who prioritize academics or have moderate views.

- "A good majority are left leaning, with a minority bring far left (protesting variety), and a minority in that being militant left (think Anakbayan)." ¹
- "The student leaders in UP like to paint themselves as 'empathetic' pero they are also engaging in corruption... black propaganda etc." ³²
- "Madaming mga 'activists' na kilala ko ang may dual lifestyle... tibak sa umaga, elitista/kapitalista sa gabi." ³³
- "There are no real right wing voice in the student faction. And any slight hint thereof is labeled as fascist." ¹⁶

Performative Activism and UP Fair

The UP Fair is a focal point of this tension—ostensibly a protest, but often criticized as a commercialized concert where activism is merely an aesthetic.

- "UP Fair is a protest... Tbh, most of the people going to UP Fair don't really care about the advocacies. They're just there for the artists." ³⁴
- "You're only activists when it's convenient, pwe!" ³⁴
- "UP Fair shouldn't exist anymore until the organizers themselves realign their goals. Seriously, the Fair has become the epitome of consumerism." ³⁴

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: Activism as Campus DNA

Political engagement is unavoidable. Even "apolitical" students cannot escape the realities of rallies, class walkouts, and the visual culture of protest (graffiti, banners). The default political stance is critical of the government, and the administration often tolerates or supports this expression.

Conflicting Views: Methods vs. Message

Most students agree with the causes (human rights, academic freedom) but disagree on the methods. There is resentment towards activists who disrupt classes, "gatekeep" morality, or shame students for enjoying "capitalist" pleasures (like shopping at the nearby mall). This creates a "purity test" culture where one is never "radical enough."

Recurring Themes: Fear of the State

A sobering theme is the shift from defiance to fear. In previous decades, being a UP activist

was a badge of invincibility; today, it is a security risk. Students are cautious about wearing their IDs in public or posting political opinions online due to the threat of red-tagging.

Unique Characteristics: The "Grandstand" Culture

UP is unique in that its student government and major social events are explicitly political. A concert is never just a concert; it is a "mobilization." This blending of leisure and resistance creates a charged atmosphere where every aspect of student life is scrutinized through a political lens.

6. Identity and Values: The Burden of the "Isko"

The identity of a UP student is built on a secular, progressive foundation, but it carries the heavy burden of "service to the nation."

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

LGBTQ+ Acceptance and Issues

UP is widely seen as a safe space for the queer community, but recent events challenge this narrative.

- "Ust lang may LGBT cupid... [UP] leads the charge." (General sentiment).
- "UP Pep Rally 2025 Homophobic Performance... Why is being gay always made into a joke? Being femme? Being a woman?" ³⁵
- "I'd even go as far as saying it's the same as blackface. Those people should be made to cross-dress... so they can realize how hard it is." ³⁵
- "We have a dedicated office just for gender issues [in Ateneo]... UP has an office but..." ¹

School Pride vs. Cynicism

The love for UP is intense but complicated by the daily hardships.

- "Contrary to what some people say, not all UP students are proud of being in UP and will scream it at the very sight of maroon... I promise you by next year everyone is tired and might even flinch at the thought of UP lol." ¹
- "UP Naming Mahal, but sometimes I really wonder, why is it so hard to love you?" ³⁶
- "If you choose 'DLSU any day of the week over UP' then you don't belong there... Having zero pride with your alma matter is detestable." ³⁷

Religious Influence

UP is uniquely secular, providing a refuge for those fleeing conservative religious environments.

- "The liberal tradition. Hindi beholden sa anumang set of dominant religion, moral code etc. What matters is freedom to believe." ¹
- "Religious orgs like Youth for Christ" exist but do not dominate campus life. ³⁸

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: Critical Nationalism

The core value of the UP identity is "Critical Nationalism." Students are indoctrinated with the idea that they owe their education to the Filipino people (taxpayers). This creates a complex identity where loving the country often manifests as hating the government. The motto "Honor and Excellence" is interpreted as a mandate to serve the people, not just to achieve personal success.

Conflicting Views: Progressive Facade vs. Reality

While UP projects an image of hyper-progressivism, the persistence of fraternity violence and occasional homophobic incidents (like the Pep Rally controversy) suggests that patriarchal values still hold sway in certain subcultures. The "safe space" is not absolute.

Recurring Themes: The Guilt of Privilege

There is a recurring theme of guilt. Students feel guilty for failing classes (wasting taxpayer money), guilty for shifting courses (delaying service), and guilty for pursuing corporate careers instead of public service. This "Iskolar ng Bayan" guilt is a significant psychological burden.

Unique Characteristics: Secular Freedom

Among the "Big 4" universities, UP is the only secular institution. There are no mandatory theology classes, no mass, and no moral policing by religious figures. This fosters a vibrant subculture of atheism, agnosticism, and open queer expression that is less policed than in UST or ADMU.

7. Campus Vibe and Atmosphere: Beautiful Ruins

The physical and emotional atmosphere of UP Diliman is one of "beautiful decay." It is green, open, and free, but also dilapidated and stressful.

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

Mental Health Crisis

The mental health of the student body is in a critical state, with demand for services far outstripping supply.

- "Saw recently na it can take up to 10 or 12 weeks before u get processed for psychserv... taena nawawalan na talaga ak gana pumasok." ³⁹
- "PsychServ has a long waiting list; they are severely understaffed... If you're tagged as 'High Risk', you'll get connected within the hour. If 'Low Risk' you might get connected after 30 days." ⁴⁰
- "What makes UP a once in a lifetime experience eh yung big chance na the person who got out is different (not always better) from the person who got in." ¹

The "Ghost" Stories

The aging infrastructure breeds urban legends, adding a layer of mystery to the campus vibe.

- "May dorm sa UP Diliman na notorious for being haunted. I think umuwi yung roommate... May double deck sila." ⁴¹
- "Either Kalayaan or Yakal lang yan since sila yun may double deck." ⁴¹

Community Support ("Bayanihan")

Suffering creates solidarity. Students rely on each other to survive the system.

- "We don't enlist in UST... Sa UP? Teh, 2 am or 4 am, may email or PM na para bang 24 hours awake [begging for slots]." ¹
- "Whatever you do, don't take alone. Find a buddy. You will need someone to cry with." (General sentiment).

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: Trauma Bonding

The defining vibe of the campus is "Trauma Bonding." Students bond over shared hardships—the heat, the terror profs, the impossible readings, the enrollment lines. This creates a very tight-knit community that is suspicious of outsiders who "don't get it."

Conflicting Views: Romanticized Struggle vs. Valid Complaint

There is a tension between "romanticizing the struggle" (viewing hardship as character-building) and demanding better facilities. Older generations often perpetuate the "during my time it was harder" narrative, while current students demand accountability for broken infrastructure and lack of support.

Recurring Themes: Decay and Nature

The campus is loved for its nature (Acacia trees, the Sunken Garden) but pitied for its facilities. The vibe is one of "ruins"—beautiful but crumbling. It is a place where intellectual excellence happens in classrooms with broken chairs and no air conditioning.

Unique Characteristics: "Chill" but "Cutthroat"

The vibe is paradoxically "chill" (students wearing slippers, sleeping on the grass) yet "cutthroat" (academically). Unlike in other universities where students might dress up, UP students dress down to cope with the heat and walking, masking the intense intellectual pressure they are under.

8. Practical/Lifestyle: The Frugal Student

Life in UP is dictated by logistics and budget. It is a walking campus where frugality is the norm.

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

Food Options and "Area 2"

Cheap food is central to the student lifestyle, with "Area 2" (A2) serving as the culinary heart of the campus.

- "Rodics - weird take on Tapsilog. Shredded ala corned beef? Underrated din calderata nila." ⁴²
- "Ate Jings Lutong Bahay - their sisig! Not really the best but it has really that homey feel." ⁴²
- "Budget Friendly... Tofu Sisig ng Sisko - Php 55.00... Pork Siomai with Rice ng Iskomai - Php 40.00." ⁴³
- "Food sa A2, karamihan 90 plus ang bawat meal, siomai rice naman, less than 50 pesos." ⁴⁴

Dorm Life and Commute

Living in UP is a battle against the elements. The "Ikot" jeep is the lifeline of the campus.

- "Bawal magluto sa lahat ng dorms but some have food catering." ⁴⁵
- "Bawal rice cooker, and 12 pesos per cup sa Area 2 on average." ⁴⁴
- "Ikot jeep from Palma Hall to CHK... Being kidnapped as a reason to use cars instead of commuting is like being transphobic." ⁴⁶
- "Jeep lines (Toki, ikot in reverse AYEEE) are several and still don't cover the whole campus." ¹

Safety and Security

Security is a mixed bag. The open campus invites theft, especially during events.

- "Don't ever put your phone in your pocket. Just hold it. Almost everyone who got robbed last year [at UP Fair] had someone bump into them." ⁴⁷
- "My phone's tracker finally settles at Ever Gotesco... suspicious piles of cellphones." ⁴⁸

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: Frugality as Culture

Budget constraints dictate lifestyle. The data shows a student body hyper-aware of prices (P55 vs P90 meals). "Tipid" (thrifty) hacks are a common topic. This stands in contrast to the "Burgis" minority who frequent nearby malls.

Conflicting Views: The "Ikot" Jeep Modernization

There is anxiety regarding the phasing out of traditional "Ikot" jeeps. Students view these not just as transport but as cultural icons. The potential shift to modernized vehicles is seen as another sign of gentrification and rising costs.

Recurring Themes: The Walking Campus

Physical movement is a huge part of the lifestyle. Students walk kilometers daily under the sun. This contributes to the casual dress code and the collective physical exhaustion of the student body.

Unique Characteristics: Open Campus Risks

Unlike the gated fortresses of ADMU or UST, UP is an open campus. This leads to unique safety issues—outsiders jogging, theft during events, and the blurring of lines between public park and university grounds.

9. Program-Specific Insights: Tribal Subcultures

UP is not one culture but a federation of college subcultures, each with its own norms and stereotypes.

Part 1: Raw Data and Student Narratives

Engineering (Engg)

Described as toxic, male-dominated, and intensely difficult.

- "Ang hirap sobra, and everyday I always doubt kung kaya ko pa... UPD is a limit tester... well at least for engg." ¹
- "Calling out specifically engineering ppl here since mostly humble ang college of science people in my experience... marami talagang mayabang sa engg." ⁴⁹
- "The app process in engg orgs usually require you interview their members... ridicule you and make fun of your insecurities." ⁶

College of Science (CS)

Viewed as difficult but more collaborative and humble than Engineering.

- "Mostly humble ang college of science people in my experience." ⁴⁹
- "My thesis adviser was a legendary terror prof in Chem pero sobrang galing." ³

Liberal Arts (CAL/CSSP)

The center of activism and "woke" culture, but also facing internal issues of performativity.

- "AS (Arts and Sciences) is another term for Palma Hall or CSSP... if someone says 'let's meet sa AS steps'." ⁵⁰
- "Cal prof threatened and red tagged students." ⁴

Business Administration (BA/CBA)

Stereotyped as the "rich kid" college, elitist, and detached from the "masses."

- "Yes, SE has this stereotype of being a rich kids college... Yes pero mas marami sa BA." ⁵¹
- "We call it 'the Ateneo of UPD' along with BA." ⁵¹

Part 2: Pattern Analysis

Dominant Patterns: Tribalism

"Engg" culture is distinct from "CAL" culture. Engg is associated with hazing and toxicity; CAL/CSSP with activism and theory; BA/Econ with wealth and corporate ambition. These tribes rarely mix outside of General Education (GE) classes.

Conflicting Views: The "Hardest" Course

There is a constant, low-level war about which course is harder. STEM students often look down on Humanities (and vice versa), though recent discourse shows a pushback against

"Engineering arrogance."

Unique Characteristics: Spatial Segregation

The physical vastness of UP segregates these cultures. Engineering students stay in the Engg complex; Science students in the National Science Complex; Arts students in the Oval. This physical separation reinforces the cultural silos.

10. Conclusion: The Culture of Critical Survival

Based on the comprehensive analysis of student narratives, the culture of UP Diliman can be best characterized as a **"Culture of Critical Survival."**

It is an environment defined by three fundamental tensions:

1. **Elitism vs. Egalitarianism:** It prides itself on being the "University of the Masses" while increasingly becoming an enclave for the wealthy ("Burgis"), leading to intense internal class warfare.
2. **Excellence vs. Inefficiency:** It produces the nation's best minds not *because* of its system, but *in spite* of it. The "excellence" is often a measure of a student's ability to survive bureaucratic incompetence, lack of resources, and academic trauma.
3. **Freedom vs. Fear:** It is the bastion of academic freedom and activism, yet its students live in constant fear of state surveillance (red-tagging) and, internally, fear of judgment from peers (cancel culture) or organizations (hazing).

To be a student at UP Diliman is to be in a constant state of negotiation—negotiating for class slots, negotiating for safety, negotiating for identity, and negotiating the burden of being the "Hope of the Nation" while barely having the energy to finish the semester. The resulting character is resilient, critical, politically astute, but deeply tired and often cynical.

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