

**Opening Remarks
by
Dr. Sumate Yamnoon
UMAP Chairperson
at the 2nd UMAP Board Meeting 2020
on Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 07.00 hours
via VDO Conference (WebEx)**

Dr. Etsuko Yaguchi, Secretary General of UMAP IS and President of Toyo University,

Professor Shingo Ashizawa
Deputy Secretary General, UMAP International Secretariat,

Distinguished Board Members,

A very good day to you all and good morning from Bangkok!

This is the first virtual UMAP Board Meeting we are conducting to accommodate the challenges brought by the pandemic–COVID-19. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to everyone for your valuable participation in the 2nd UMAP Board Meeting 2020.

Though we continue facing the uncertainty and the unknown, it heightens our strength of each locality to care more for community issues and call for close cooperation for their own health and safety. It could be seen clearly from the efforts of UMAP International Secretariat and their member countries and territories to think of some reliable and effective platform for re-designing mobility programs responding to the student mobility recalibrating program development such as UMAP Exchange Online, UMAP-COIL Program (Online Joint Classroom), Hybrid Program, and UMAP Online Student Conference which will be discussed later on. Although they are in the trial stage, I am confident that these alternative programs will be a good milestone for the student mobility models in the future.

For me personally, I think COVID-19 will not leave us that soon, so virtual mobility initiative proves more valuable as it enables international and intercultural experiences for non-traditional students regularly found in distance education. Therefore, I think it is time to utilize the most benefit of the existing resources to build the sharing economy through the virtual exchange not only for students but also for faculty and administrators. We must begin to look for the future now and plan on what to learn from policies to platform and practices. I believe that our higher education community will be much stronger digitally and will be stronger if we carefully capture lesson learned from the mixed approaches used. This would definitely help people grow better in longer terms.

Before concluding, I wish to reiterate the critical role that we will play in the sustainable development and implementation of UMAP for our future generation.

I wish to thank you for your commitment which is demonstrated by your participation from different parts of the world in different time zones.

I wish you all a fruitful and positive deliberations.

Thank you
