

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4534



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR OPEN UNIVERSITIES AND
CENTERS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION BY STATE UNIVERSITIES AND
COLLEGES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The twenty-first century economy requires citizens to learn continuously throughout their lives. Workers and professionals must adapt to new technologies, changing industries, and emerging challenges. Yet, access to higher education in the Philippines remains limited by traditional structures that cannot easily accommodate adult learners, working students, and out-of-school youth.

This bill institutionalizes a National Program for Open Universities and Continuing Education Centers under State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and community colleges. Modeled after successful initiatives such as the University of the Philippines Open University, the program democratizes higher learning through distance, online, and hybrid modalities, flexible admission, recognition of prior learning, and modular certifications.

The establishment of Centers for Continuing Education (CCE) ensures that SUCs and community colleges become hubs for reskilling, professional development, and community-based training. These centers will deliver short courses, micro-credentials, and lifelong learning opportunities in coordination with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The bill also mandates digital infrastructure support through the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and provides tax incentives for industry training partnerships.

By enacting this measure, Congress will ensure that Filipinos have access to lifelong learning opportunities that enhance employability, productivity, and competitiveness, while strengthening the role of SUCs and community colleges as drivers of inclusive development.

Immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the “Open Universities and Continuing Education Development Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote lifelong learning, continuing professional development, and flexible access to higher education. The State recognizes the role of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and community colleges in democratizing access to quality education by adopting open, distance, and blended learning systems responsive to the needs of workers, professionals, out-of-school youth, and communities.

SEC. 3. *Establishment of the Program.* There is hereby established a National Program for Open Universities and Continuing Education Centers to be implemented by SUCs and community colleges under the supervision of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

SEC. 4. *Open Universities.*

(a) Each SUC may establish an Open University System, or designate existing colleges as open university units, to deliver higher education through open, distance, online, or hybrid modalities.

(b) Open Universities shall:

1. Provide flexible admission and recognition of prior learning;
2. Offer modular, micro-credential, and stackable degree programs;

3. Utilize digital learning platforms, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and blended modalities; and
4. Align courses with national development priorities, including digital economy, health, agriculture, climate resilience, and technical skills.

SEC. 5. Centers for Continuing Education.

(a) All SUCs and community colleges shall establish a Center for Continuing Education (CCE) as an extension arm to deliver short-term courses, training, and certification programs.

(b) CCEs shall provide programs in:

1. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for licensed professionals, in coordination with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC);
2. Reskilling and upskilling for workers in partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
3. Entrepreneurial and business training in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); and
4. Community-based skills programs for farmers, fisherfolk, cooperatives, and informal workers.

SEC. 6. Role of Community Colleges. Community colleges shall serve as local hubs for continuing education and lifelong learning, in partnership with Local Government Units (LGUs) and local industries, ensuring responsiveness to labor market and community needs.

SEC. 7. Digital Infrastructure. The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), in coordination with CHED, shall provide digital infrastructure support to SUCs and community colleges, including broadband expansion, learning management systems, and digital learning commons.

SEC. 8. Industry and Government Linkages.

(a) CHED, TESDA, DOLE, PRC, and DTI shall jointly develop curriculum standards, accreditation mechanisms, and industry linkages.

(b) Private companies that send employees for training under this Act shall be entitled to deduct training expenses from their gross income, in accordance with the National Internal Revenue Code, as amended.

SEC. 9. Governance. CHED shall issue guidelines for the accreditation of open universities and CCE programs. SUCs and community colleges shall be responsible for program implementation and reporting to CHED.

SEC. 10. *Funding.* The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. SUCs and community colleges may also source funds from industry partnerships, donor institutions, and government grants.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, CHED, in consultation with TESDA, PRC, DOLE, DTI, DICT, and representatives of SUCs and community colleges, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall not be affected.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,