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Open RAN and an Academic's Perspective: An Interview with Josyl Reyes

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As open RAN technology becomes more globally known and testing by leading mobile operators increases, it is only right to explore how this technology will be academically incorporated in educational institutions. A key goal of the Asia Open RAN Academy is just that – bringing quality course content to the academic field to support students in acquiring skills to increase their employment and salary options as they enter the job market. Josyl Reyes is a full-time faculty member at Santo Tomas University Manila and an AORA Course Content Creator. She specializes in wireless sensing and machine learning and is currently undertaking her PhD at Hong Kong' Polytechnic University focused on wireless indoor positioning systems using challenge state information (CSI) and machine learning. This month she took time to sit down and discuss her journey into open RAN and how she sees adoption pathways of open RAN course content by higher educational institutions in the Philippines. “I joined the IT field when I pursued my master’s in computer and communications. My exposure has been primarily in the areas of research and academia. I was appointed earlier this year by my University to represent us during initial dialogue with the IDG team regarding the concept of an open RAN Academy,” said Ms. Reyes.

How do you see the Academy and what it hopes to achieve as tying into the academic sphere in the Philippines? “I definitely see a connection. Although our curriculum is governed by the Commission on Higher Education, we take note of what the industry highlights as emerging technologies. We often update our curriculum based on industry trajectory. We want to expose our students as early as possible to new and emerging trends in order for them to better understand the different systems and hopefully improve their employability options. For us, we have the flexibility to offer electives and add modules to existing units. Personally, I think this is a good way to integrate open RAN into the curriculum – at the undergraduate level as elective courses, and then build on that. Of course, there will always be a gap between academia and industry when it comes to emerging technology. Industry plans years into the future when working on emerging technology. But we do our best to keep with the moving times.”

As someone who is also new to open RAN how did you come to be an AORA Course Creator? “From my industry, I did have some background knowledge. However, as a researcher I knew there was more to learn. I signed up for online webinars and took advantage of free online courses offered by Telecom University, ORAN Alliance, 3GPP etc. I applied myself to learn as much as possible from these resources in order to formulate content to meet our local Filipino needs.”

What do you find intriguing about the open RAN concept? “I would say the virtualization component. In a traditional set up a device is designated to perform a specific task, but with open RAN it is separated. That separation between device function and software is interesting. You no longer have to understand the specific device but rather how it functions.”

USAID through the Asia Open RAN Academy is committed to advancing digital and economic growth while advancing deploying of commercial via solutions – building a local talent pool and fostering robust and diverse telecommunications ecosystems and economics across the region. The Academy looks forward to solidifying partnerships with leading universities to support academic incorporation of open RAN in the Indo-Pacific.

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