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By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (*JGLi*) – In his State of the Union address last Tuesday (Jan. 25), President Barack Obama rued that some students come to America “from abroad to study in our colleges and universities. But as soon as they obtain advanced degrees, we send them back home to compete against us. It makes no sense.”

The President might as well be referring to Amado Gabriel M. Esteban, who took up a Ph. D. in Administration (emphasis on Marketing) from the University of California-Irvine on a scholarship. This was after he obtained his bachelors and masters degrees from the University of the Philippines. Dr. Esteban’s wife earned an MBA from the University of California at Riverside while he was at the UC-Irvine.

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But before Dr. Esteban could return to the Philippines, he was offered a teaching job at the University

of

Texas-Victoria

which petitioned him to be a

U.S.

immigrant in 1990s, putting him on course to become the first Filipino-American president of a four-year university in the

United States

. While there are 2,600 four-year colleges and universities in

U.S.

,
SHU

is also a doctoral university, offering science education, health sciences, including nursing. It has 10,000 students.

“I have a job waiting for me in the Philippines but when the economic crises hit Asia, we decided that we have better opportunities in the

United States

,” Dr. Esteban told this reporter in a phone interview.

When asked how he got the job as president of Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey

Esteban said, “There is no substitute for hard work, discipline and prayer. And the Archbishop (of

Newark

, Most Rev. John J. Myers) and the board of trustees knew that I am familiar with the culture of the university.”

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EXCEPTION TO BY-LAWS

Last year, the board of trustees was looking for a priest to replace him as interim president of 154-year-old university.

But when it could not find a priest the board made an exception in the by-laws of the university and made his interim appointment as permanent president.

The board also prolonged his appointment from the usual three years to five-and-a-half years.

“I am really thrilled that the board made an exception in my case.” Dr. Esteban said. He told the *New York Times* he will just pursue the strategic plan that he had set out when he was the University’s provost since 2007, strengthening the Catholic mission and certain academic areas, making admissions more selective and bolstering finances.

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Esteban was only appointed interim president last July, succeeding Monsignor Robert Sheeran, who stepped down from the position after 15 years.

A native of Manila, Philippines, Esteban, 49, told this reporter he originally wanted to be a doctor of medicine, like his father, the late Jose Esteban, who taught at the University of the Philippines

. His mother, Isabelita Munson Esteban, was also a teacher.

But because he was good at math, he thought of taking up actuarial science. He ended up taking up computer science and landing his first job in college as computer programmer.

“Mahina ako mag-drawing o mag-sketch kaya I did not try engineering,” (I am poor in drawing or making sketches so I did not study engineering), Dr. Esteban recalled.

He would later work in Metrobank while he pursued his MBA at UP while teaching marketing.

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When he got a scholarship for masters in Japanese Studies, he seized the opportunity to attend Chaminade University, a Catholic university in Honolulu, Hawaii.

STUDIED NIPPONGO

He later worked in Tokyo, Japan, and studied Nippongo at Tokyo's Sophia University. His Nippongo is now getting rusty as he hardly used it.

Esteban returned to the Philippines in 1986 to work at San Miguel Corporation while his wife, Josephine King Esteban, worked at what used to be Center for Research and Communications (now University of Asia and the Pacific).

But when he and his wife got scholarships again, they returned to the United States. He took up Ph. D. at the University of California at Irvine while his wife took up MBA at UIC Riverside. They have a child, Ysabelle, an

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SHU
junior.

He became an assistant professor at the University of Houston-Victoria and later moved to Arkansas Tech University to become associate vice president for academic affairs.

Dr. Esteban became provost and dean of the College of Business and tenured professor of marketing at the University of Central Arkansas.

Dr. Esteban is also active in various national, regional and community groups, among them as member of the board of the Asian-Pacific Americans in Higher Education and the South Orange Performing Center.

He now leads the oldest diocesan university in the U.S. and a major Catholic national university

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with a budget in excess of \$230-million and more-than 1,300 employees. It has 450 faculties and a budget of \$150-million.

When asked where he will be after five years from now, Dr. Esteban said it is hard to tell, "maybe I can be president of another university." # # #

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