

## Margarito “Gary” Teves 1968 CDE

As part of a high-profile career in the Philippines as a banker, economist, and lawmaker, Gary Teves has served as Secretary of the Department of Finance of the Philippines since July 2005. His five-year tenure of pragmatism comes in sharp contrast to an average term of less than two years for other Secretaries of Finance over the previous twenty years. This is especially noteworthy since Secretary Teves has been architect of a broad program to raise tax revenue in his country. Teves was named recently by the Banker magazine as “Asia’s Finance Minister of the Year 2009.”

After starting in the public sector as an economist on the Presidential Economic Staff in the mid-60’s, Teves was selected to attend Williams in 1967-68. Following his stint at the CDE, Teves returned to the Philippines and continued work as a government economist for several years. In 1971, however, he left a staff role when he was elected as a delegate for the country’s Constitutional Convention held in 1971-72. Less than 30 years old at the time, Teves drew notice when he spoke out in favor of presidential term limits in a country governed by longtime President Ferdinand Marcos.

For the next decade and a half, Teves raised a family and worked in the private sector, first for a family-owned sugar mill and then as an economist and planner for a leading private sector group, the Ayala Corporation. In 1987, after Corazon Aquino had become President the previous year, Teves ran for Congress from the Third District of Negros Oriental and was elected to his first of three terms (the maximum permitted by the Philippine constitution). He served in Congress until 1998, and his responsibilities included being Chair of the Committee on Rural Development and Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs. As a lawmaker, Teves was a proponent of legislation to reform the banking and finance sectors, to attract foreign investment and promote industrial competitiveness, and to provide safety nets while still enhancing agricultural competitiveness.

Upon reaching his term limit in 1998, Teves returned to private life and started an economic forecasting and consulting firm in the Philippines. Soon, however, he was asked by then President Joseph Estrada to return to public service. After declining appointments to lead both the Philippine National Bank and the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission, Teves agreed in 2000 to act as President and CEO of the Land Bank of the Philippines. Landbank, a government-owned bank focused on providing finance to the agricultural and fishing sectors, seemed a better fit for Teves because it made direct use of the expertise he had forged as a legislator on projects in rural areas. He served Landbank through July 2005, and his leadership is widely credited with restoring the institution’s mandate and profitability.

Since 2005, Secretary of Finance Teves has been a highly visible public figure urging individual Filipinos to register as taxpayers and to pay their fair share of taxes. The result has been increases in overall revenue collected and gradual reductions in the country’s debt to GDP ratio. The personal calm and fortitude exhibited by Secretary Teves showed

especially favorably during 2008 as he helped the Philippines to maintain its financial focus and to limit the impact of the global financial crisis. During the depths of the crisis in October 2008, Secretary Teves still found time to visit Williams College after meetings in Washington and to deliver a talk about some of the leadership challenges he has faced.