



# COLLEGE ALUMNI ORGANIZATIONS: THEIR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT IN TARLAC STATE UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

*This research examined alumni involvement as institutional stakeholders at Tarlac State University (TSU), including their participation in governance, decision-making, policy and program formulation, and project implementation. Since they provide financial donations, mentorship, and strategic counsel that shape institutional growth, alumni are widely recognized as significant donors to higher education institutions worldwide. Although there has been widespread informal alumni engagement in the Philippine setting thus far, the desire to include alumni in governance should be suitably institutionalized. A descriptive quantitative research approach was used for the study, and 381 TSU alumni were polled between 2000 and 2025 using a stratified random sample technique to ensure that alumni from all colleges participated. Alumni organizations were found to be successful models of accountability, transparency, governance, and alignment with the institution's objectives. Due to their frequent consultation in decision-making, alumni have a comparatively moderate amount of impact. Their participation in the creation of policies and programs, which included outreach initiatives, board test preparation, career mentoring, and scholarships, was highly regarded. Alumni participation in development-focused projects was substantial, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, legal aid, and extension services. The degree of involvement varied greatly throughout the colleges, with the College of Public Administration and Governance and the School of Law having the highest levels of interest. Little formal procedures, uneven presence among universities, and a lack of an advanced feedback structure were among the hurdles encountered in an attempt to overcome these unfavorable outcomes. The study concludes that alumni can have a significant impact on TSU governance and recommends formalizing sustainable and participative engagement strategies to strengthen alumni's influence on university life.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Alumni Involvement, Governance, Decision-Making, Policy Formulation, Program Development, Developmental Projects, Tarlac State University, Stakeholder Engagement*

## INTRODUCTION

(Alumni support is critical for the advancement of higher education institutions globally, contributing to both institutional development and policy and program enhancement (Bieger, 2024). Today, as educational and academic institutions navigate a complex and dynamic global landscape, alumni contributions have assumed greater importance. Harvard, Stanford, Oxford all have extensive alumni networks, which are actively involved in governance, fundraising, mentoring, and academic program development (Goh, 2025). These institutions have also come to view alumni as stakeholders and know they also can be a source of philanthropy, connections where other alumni work and, importantly, practical guides to the types of things that should be aimed for, which can then influence institutional policies and programmatic improvements (Bodrick, 2023).

Alumni participation in governance structures is not a new concept but rather an emerging paradigm that mirrors the growing trend of participatory governance in higher education. Thompson and Li (2020) emphasize that alumni not only preserve and promote institutional identity but also enhance institutional resilience by sharing operational knowledge in planning and governance. Drezner (2018) asserts that sustained alumni involvement through financial support, mentorship, and strategic advice is essential for the long-term sustainability and adaptability of higher education institutions.

In Asia, schools like the National University of Singapore and the University of Tokyo have taken up the practice of involving

alumni as advisors, showcasing the gains from engaging alumni expertise in influencing institutions' policies and programs. Others have institutionalized alumni engagement practices with their establishment of the councils and advisory boards to ensure the presence of alumni voices during long-term strategic planning in these institutions. With this growing recognition of the role of alumni as truly achieved stakeholders one identifies a strong need to introduce sustainable arrangements that will allow the integration of the alumni in the internal frameworks of institutional governance and decision making.

Colleges and universities have learned that alumni are among the biggest stakeholders in any given university and that same trend can be seen in the Philippines. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has formulated policies that promote alumni involvement in accreditation, curriculum, and extension programs. These initiatives seek to improve institutional quality and accountability through the inclusion of the alumni voice in the decision making process. Engaging graduates has been found by Ocampo (2017) and Villanueva (2020) to be becoming valuable for Philippine universities in establishing fund sources, industry connections, and even contributing to policy-making and advocacy, which have been noted to be key elements of an institution's growth and adaptability. Despite these recognized contributions, however, most alumni engagement is informal, and it is underutilized within the decision-making processes of many local universities.



At the regional level, higher education institutions in the Central Luzon area (including Tarlac State University – TSU) are generally supported by active alumni networks that provide assistance for different endeavours. The TSU Alumni Association, Inc. plays an important role in community outreach, infrastructure development, and scholarship programs, with significant contributions also stemming from its constituent College Alumni Organizations. Alumni chapters both locally and globally have each started their very own initiative projects that focus on student, faculty, and institutional growth. In order to provide better educational services and facilities to students and faculty members, the association has already bridged the gap between other fields by partnering with the industries, other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. In the absence of systematic mechanisms to engage alumni in TSU's policy and program development, however, there is little understanding of how alumni engagement can be effectively channelled in ways that are consistent with its strategic priorities.

This dynamic environment in TSU is further impacted by the steps that the TSU Alumni Association, Inc. is making towards legal compliance by becoming a federation. This implicates that individual College Alumni Organisation is gaining greater pivotal significance. The transformation into federated structure requires greater involvement and formalization of alumni in their respective organizations within their respective colleges as their participation is needed to make the TSU Alumni Association, Inc. become strong on all levels legally. This only stresses the emerging importance of knowing ways in which these College Alumni Organizations can best serve the system-wide policies and program functions of the university. TSU fosters excellence in scholarly pursuits, research innovation and shared governance. TSU is an inclusive institution which means that it has to include the stakeholders and most importantly the alumni in the process of making the decisions that are going to be taken in the institution. The alumni are especially helpful in offering an invaluable insight on what the university has done well, done poorly, and what more it can do. Their experiential witness in academia and the post-college working environment have the ability to shape the policies and programs of institutions by insights that we have no right to assume of knowing.

While the positive impacts of alumni engagement are undeniable, the role of alumni in formal governance bodies, especially in policy development and programming, is an area that needs to be better understood. Although TSU has made attempts to engage alumni through the TSU Alumni Association, Inc., and its various chapters, there remains a lack of an organized process that systematically incorporates the contributions specifically from its College Alumni Organizations into the university's governance structure. This opens the door for building a sustainable model for alumni engagement, consistent with the mission, vision, and strategic objectives of the university.

This study addressed the gap by exploring TSU's opportunities to enhance alumni participation in institutional governance. In

particular, it examined current models of alumni engagement, explored obstacles to engagement, and recommended ways to structure alumni engagement in the context of policy-making and program development. The results provided the ground on which inclusive decision-making policies could be further enhanced in a bid to cater to sustainable development of institutional capacity. The study also explains how other institutions with positive alumni engagement models have been doing and from this TSU obtained a better understanding on how to implement governance mechanisms to better their alumni engagement in the institution.

The proposed study by the researcher has a well-documented basis due to the rich experience gained in the TSU Office of Alumni Affairs. The researcher also worked as a student assistant in the office, thus, having direct access to insights into the field of alumni engagement strategies and their application within the context of institutional programs, and it allows the researcher to appreciate the importance of these strategies in higher education fully. This experience had a lesson in the importance of alumni relations in the development of institutions. Some refinement in terms of professional background in being a technical personnel, involved in the alumni-related programmes enabled the researcher to make critical evaluations of the influence of alumni participation in the university governance and policy development. As an administrative clerk, I also had an idea of how an institution could be governed, gather information on alumni engagement deliberations, and strategic planning.

These experiences have also furnished the researcher with the skills needed to develop the in-depth study on alumni as an institutional stakeholders in the formation of TSU policy and program development. Cooperation with alumni affairs organizations directly has made available the necessary stakeholders, data, and institutional expertise that this research needed. Moreover, the fact that the researcher is conversant with the governance systems operating in the university allows him to provide detailed discussion on the current engagement practices and come up with prescriptive solutions that relate to long-term functions of TSU.

This paper added to the overarching conversation on the alumni involvement in the governance in higher education. In highlighting the role of alumni as institutional stakeholders, the study aimed to inform policy-making processes and institutional decision-making to enhance constructive alumni engagement. In the long term, it aspired to strengthen TSU's commitment to participatory governance, ensuring that alumni contributions were systematically integrated into the university's development plan.

### Statement of the Problem

This study explored the role of TSU alumni as institutional stakeholders and examine how their contributions can enhance the university's policy and program development:

The study addressed the following key questions:

1. How is the level of the College Alumni Organizations' engagement in the Tarlac State University be described along areas of:



- 1.1 Governance
- 1.2 Decision Making Process
- 1.3 Policy and Program development
- 1.4 Developmental Projects Implementation
2. What are the differences in the engagement across College Alumni Organization?
3. What are the problems encountered by the College Alumni Organizations affecting their engagement?
4. What measures can be proposed to improve alumni engagement?
5. Implications of the study to Public Administration

## MATERIALS AND METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to systematically examine the extent of alumni involvement, the engagement mechanisms in policy and program development, and the problems and facilitators that influenced alumni participation in institutional governance. Additionally, the study proposed enhancements to existing policies and programs aimed at strengthening alumni engagement within the university's decision-making framework.

A descriptive research design was deemed appropriate as it enabled the systematic collection, quantification, and analysis of data concerning alumni participation in governance and policy formulation. This methodological approach facilitated an empirical assessment of the degree to which alumni engaged with institutional processes, the mechanisms that facilitated such engagement, and the problems that impeded effective participation. By utilizing quantitative methods, the study ensured that findings were objective, measurable, and generalizable, thereby contributing to evidence-based recommendations for improving alumni engagement strategies.

To achieve these objectives, the study employed a structured survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. The questionnaire was carefully developed by reviewing existing instruments from related studies on alumni engagement, governance participation, and stakeholder involvement. From these sources, relevant items were adapted and modified to align with the present research objectives and the specific context of Tarlac State University. This ensured that the instrument captured the nuances of alumni engagement across governance, decision-making, and policy development.

After the initial drafting, the questionnaire underwent expert validation to ensure its relevance, clarity, and appropriateness. It was reviewed by three experts: Hon. Reynaldo L. Catacutan, President of Tarlac State University Alumni Association, Inc.; Fidel S. Feliciano, 1st Vice President of Tarlac State University Alumni Association, Inc.; and Dr. Winston F. Abalos, Director of the Office of Alumni Affairs. Their evaluation confirmed the face and content validity of the instrument, particularly in ensuring that the questions reflected the practical realities of alumni involvement.

In addition, the instrument was subjected to statistical validation and reliability testing. Statisticians reviewed the questionnaire to refine its structure, ensure logical sequencing of items, and assess its consistency in measuring constructs. Results of the reliability testing confirmed that the instrument met the acceptable standards for internal consistency, making it suitable for wider administration.

The final version of the questionnaire measured the level and frequency of alumni involvement in university activities and governance processes, the mechanisms through which alumni were engaged in policy and program development, the challenges or barriers affecting their participation, and the perceived effectiveness of existing policies and programs along with suggested improvements. The survey was administered to a randomly selected sample of alumni who graduated from the year 2000 to the present, ensuring the inclusion of respondents familiar with the university's contemporary governance structures and strategic initiatives. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, means, and percentages to identify key trends and patterns. Where applicable, correlation analysis was employed to explore relationships between alumni engagement and demographic variables such as graduation year and field of study.

Through this rigorous process of development, validation, and reliability testing, the research instrument was established as a sound tool for collecting empirical data on alumni engagement. Its use strengthened the credibility of the findings, ensuring that conclusions and recommendations were drawn from reliable, valid, and contextually appropriate measures.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Alumni as Stakeholders.** Alumni are not merely beneficiaries of education but strategic partners influencing policy, governance, and institutional sustainability (Thompson & Li, 2020; McDearmon, 2016). Sustained alumni engagement strengthens institutional adaptability through governance, mentorship, and advocacy (Stephenson & Bell, 2017).

**Frameworks of Engagement.** Formal alumni councils and advisory boards provide universities with structured channels for alumni input (Jaeger & Jameson-Meedy, 2016; Clotfelter, 2019). Asian institutions such as NUS integrate alumni insights through surveys and mentorship programs (Tan & Tan, 2016).

**Challenges.** Alumni participation is often hindered by fragmented communication, lack of transparency, and generational differences (Watson & Hollister, 2018; Khodakarami et al., 2024). In the Philippines, Domingo (2020) noted that alumni are more often tapped as donors than governance partners.

**Best Practices.** Leading institutions demonstrate that alumni engagement in governance can improve strategic direction, align academic programs with labor market needs, and



strengthen institutional accountability (Scott & McCarthy, 2019; Nelloh et al., 2025).

**Theoretical Framework.** This study adopts Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes that alumni, as key stakeholders, must be given a voice in institutional governance, ensuring participatory and inclusive decision-making.

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The findings of this study confirm that alumni are not peripheral supporters but integral stakeholders in the governance of higher education institutions. At TSU, the mean scores across governance (3.91), decision-making (3.90), policy and program development (4.01), and developmental projects (4.00) all indicate that alumni engagement is both present and valued by the academic community. These consistently high ratings highlight a culture of alumni involvement that extends beyond ceremonial roles and align with Thompson and Li's (2020) assertion that alumni participation strengthens institutional adaptability and resilience.

### Governance: Transparency and Accountability

The strongest rating was in governance, particularly the statement "My College Alumni Organization upholds transparency and accountability" (mean = 4.08). This suggests that alumni recognize their organizations as practicing responsible and ethical governance. Abo-Khalil (2024) emphasizes that transparency fosters trust between institutions and stakeholders, creating conditions for long-term collaboration. Alumni who perceive their organizations as accountable are more likely to contribute resources, time, and expertise. However, the slightly lower perception of alumni influence in governance (3.82) suggests that while processes are transparent, alumni may still feel underrepresented in decision-making. Weatherston et al. (2024) caution that structural barriers, such as lack of voting rights or limited formal channels, often restrict alumni from fully shaping institutional outcomes. TSU demonstrates strong governance values but still has room to institutionalize inclusive governance mechanisms that amplify alumni voices.

### Decision-Making: Consultation versus Influence

The results on decision-making (overall mean = 3.90) highlight a distinction between being consulted and being influential. Alumni agreed that they are regularly consulted by the administration (mean = 3.95), but fewer strongly agreed that they effectively influence decisions (mean = 3.83). This reflects Graham et al.'s (2022) finding that stakeholder consultation, if not linked to tangible influence, risks being perceived as tokenistic. In CPAG, where alumni hold a formal seat in the Board of Regents, influence is more direct. This explains why CPAG posted the highest mean in this area (4.33). This contrast illustrates that formal representation translates consultation into impact. It reinforces McNaught's (2023) argument that stakeholder ownership is fostered when participation is built into institutional structures.

### Policy and Program Development: The Strongest Domain

Policy and program development received the highest overall mean (4.01). Alumni across colleges recognized their insights as valuable (4.13) and were aware of formal mechanisms for contributing (4.08). This indicates that TSU has institutionalized some effective channels for alumni input, such as testimonial dinners, assemblies, and mentorship initiatives. Programs like scholarships, bar review sponsorships, mental health awareness campaigns, and board exam preparation illustrate alumni's dual role as resource providers and knowledge partners. These findings align with Weng et al. (2022), who stress that alumni bring real-world expertise that ensures academic programs remain relevant to labor market needs. However, the slightly lower score for "interest in contributing expertise" (3.87) suggests barriers such as time constraints and lack of awareness. Najjar et al. (2025) note that many alumni perceive their role as limited to financial support rather than hands-on engagement, unless institutions create clear pathways for active participation.

### Developmental Projects: Sustained Alumni Impact

The overall mean of 4.00 in developmental projects underscores alumni's significant role in infrastructure, outreach, and resource provision. Colleges such as Engineering, Law, and Business and Accountancy have demonstrated that alumni-led projects, ranging from board exam review centers to community feeding programs, can directly enhance student outcomes. Žalėnienė and Pereira (2021) argue that alumni involvement in developmental projects bridges academia and community, ensuring that initiatives are both impactful and sustainable. Alumni investment of time, funds, and expertise fosters a culture of co-ownership where graduates feel directly responsible for the university's success. Nevertheless, the data suggests opportunities to broaden alumni participation beyond financial contributions and toward more active roles in project planning and implementation.

### Variations Across Colleges

The study also revealed significant differences across colleges, highlighting that alumni engagement is not uniform. The School of Law (mean = 4.50 in governance) stands out due to strong traditions of alumni support in bar operations, moot courts, and legal aid. This demonstrates how professional alignment fosters deep alumni-student linkages. CPAG's high score in decision-making (4.33) is linked to alumni representation in TSU's Board of Regents, showing that formalized governance roles enhance influence. By contrast, the Laboratory School reported minimal engagement (means as low as 1.00), reflecting weak organizational structures and limited alumni connection. These findings suggest that alumni engagement is context-dependent and influenced by the culture of the college, organizational support, and opportunities for formal representation.

### Implications for TSU and Higher Education Governance

The overall findings affirm that alumni are a largely untapped governance resource. When properly engaged, they provide



financial resources, professional expertise, and policy insights that align institutions with societal needs. However, consultation without influence risks diminishing alumni enthusiasm. For TSU, the challenge lies in transforming high alumni interest into formalized governance participation. This can be achieved through advisory boards, expanded alumni coordinator roles, and clearer feedback mechanisms.

These results resonate with Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes that institutions should integrate the perspectives of those directly affected by their policies. By embedding alumni participation into governance frameworks, TSU can achieve more inclusive, accountable, and participatory governance. For public administration, this case illustrates how stakeholder engagement, often discussed in government contexts, can be effectively applied in higher education. It reinforces democratic values in institutional management and demonstrates that inclusive governance contributes to long-term institutional sustainability.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of findings provided, the following conclusions were derived from the study:

1. The study revealed significant variations in alumni engagement across colleges of Tarlac State University, with the School of Law (SOL) and the College of Public Administration and Governance (CPAG) showing the highest levels of involvement, while the Laboratory School (LS) demonstrated very low engagement.
2. Alumni expressed positive perceptions of their involvement in governance, policy and program development, and developmental projects, although their influence in decision-making processes remained moderate.
3. The main problems identified in fostering greater alumni engagement were time constraints, geographical distance, and limited communication channels.
4. Alumni indicated a preference for flexible engagement opportunities, such as online platforms and short-term projects, rather than formal roles in governance.
5. The results highlight the need for targeted strategies to enhance engagement in colleges with lower participation and to address logistical barriers in order to foster a more active and sustainable alumni community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a list of potential recommendations based on the research's findings and conclusions.

Alumni organizations may be encouraged to strengthen the use of digital platforms as a primary medium for engagement to address issues of time constraints and geographical distance. Virtual assemblies, online forums, and webinars may be implemented to provide flexible opportunities for participation regardless of location or schedule. The establishment of an official alumni portal or mobile application may also serve as a centralized hub for announcements, networking, and event registration, allowing alumni to contribute their expertise and resources even without physical attendance.

2. To mitigate communication gaps and lack of awareness, alumni organizations may be advised to institutionalize clearer and more structured communication channels. This may include the regular publication of alumni newsletters, verified social media pages, and updated alumni databases in coordination with the Office of Alumni Affairs. Designating communication officers in each college alumni organization may also ensure consistency in disseminating information and connecting members with ongoing initiatives.

3. Alumni organizations may be encouraged to provide more meaningful and impactful involvement opportunities by expanding initiatives beyond social gatherings to professional, academic, and community development projects. Mentorship programs, industry networking events, and alumni-led training or seminars may serve as avenues where alumni actively contribute to student success and institutional development. Collaborations with colleges in identifying strategic projects such as facility improvements, scholarship programs, or community outreach activities may also align alumni contributions with the broader goals of TSU.

4. TSU and the Alumni Association may be advised to expand alumni representation in consultative and policy-making bodies to address perceptions of limited influence in decision-making. Establishing alumni advisory councils at the college level, with regular opportunities to present recommendations to the administration, may institutionalize their role in shaping programs and policies. This recognition of alumni expertise may enhance their sense of ownership and strengthen their participation in university affairs.

5. Alumni organizations may be encouraged to strengthen their resource mobilization strategies to overcome financial and human resource constraints. Initiatives may include establishing endowment funds, forging partnerships with local industries, and launching fundraising campaigns to support scholarships and developmental projects. Successful alumni may also be encouraged to act as benefactors or sponsors for specific initiatives, ensuring sustainability and inspiring broader member participation.