

### *Three Model Career Centers Bridge Industry-Academe Barriers*

The Philippines is home to more than 2,000 higher education institutions. However, while academically strong, many of the universities typically have few tools to offer students that will provide experiential learning — or “real-world” application of what is being taught. As a result, students are often unprepared for their careers and employers have little to no input into student development. The Philippines has seen strong economic growth over the past decade, with major increases in the services, construction, science and technology fields. The country’s economy is also projected to continue to expand over the next several years<sup>1</sup>. Despite this consistent growth, because universities have traditionally tended to focus on academic achievements at the expense of other skills, employers often struggle to recruit qualified employees, despite the availability of both graduates and jobs.

To address this issue, USAID’s Science, Technology, Research, and Innovation for Development (STRIDE) project and the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan (WDI) partnered with three Philippine universities to provide support as they worked to establish career services offices. While the key function of a career center is to prepare students for future careers, it also plays a role in alumni engagement, industry relations, and student development, and can make significant contributions to the strategic direction of a university. As an office that works with students, faculty, and employers, the career center can also serve to provide cohesion and a central location to house the many activities and initiatives present on a college campus.

In the case of the three Philippine model career centers, located at the Technological Institute of the Philippines (T.I.P.), the University of Santo Tomas (UST) and the University of Iloilo (UI), each began the engagement with STRIDE with various budgetary and logistical capacities and with varying levels of support from their administrations. However, none of the three had a physical office dedicated to career services or full time staff. Now, at the



**Despite beginning its engagement without a career center or staff, T.I.P. quickly developed a high-functioning team and a dedicated career center building**

<sup>1</sup> World Bank Global Economic Prospects Report, p.78 (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org>)



**A major program developed at UI was training for students, including conducting mock interviews and resume building**

conclusion of the project, each of the three universities has a dedicated space set aside for career services, full time staff, established programs for student, alumni, and industry engagement, and strategic plans for the next several years.

To partner effectively with the three career centers, WDI worked with six U.S.-based experts from universities including Stanford University, UC-Berkeley, and the University of Florida. Two U.S. experts were paired with each Philippine university for the duration of the project. During the first year, the

engagement consisted of an initial site visit by the U.S. experts to review the context and capacity of each school and make recommendations for strategic direction and achievable goals during the course of the project. During the two following years, the U.S. experts made two additional site visits and continued to follow up on the initial recommendations and make new recommendations based on the improving capacity and priorities of each school.

Due to wide variation between each school's budgetary, staffing, and logistical capabilities at the beginning of the engagement, each university made progress and established programs and services unique to their own contexts. For example, despite not beginning the STRIDE project with a career center, T.I.P.'s leadership was highly invested in the career services project and made the development of a center a significant part of the school's strategic planning. For this reason, the U.S. experts, Dr. Farouk Dey and Dr. Heather White, were able to continually revise and expand their recommendations each year. In the case of UST, prior to the STRIDE engagement the university operated a counseling center consisting of 40 staff, but did not focus exclusively on career services. Moreover, the size of UST's student body (40,000 undergraduates) led the U.S. experts, Mr. Joe Testani and Ms. Christine Cruzvergara, to

“One of the major things I learned at the NACE conference is to first define the kind of engagement and partnerships that the university would like to develop with companies and other organizations. This information should be communicated to the different offices of the university work more effectively and gain positive impact for the whole community. It will help the career services office know where to focus its energies”

*Ms. Maria Bonifacio  
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recommend development of new programs to meet the needs of the student body and effective division of labor so that both career services and student counseling could operate effectively. Finally, in the case of UI, the school began working with STRIDE despite having very few resources available for career services. For this reason, the U.S. experts, Mr. Andy Ceperley and Dr. Brian Guerrero, made recommendations consisting of initial steps in the creation of a center and development of new programs beginning at the concept stage.

In addition to these activities, WDI was able to support nine career center staff from T.I.P., UST, and UI to attend the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conference in the US in 2015 and 2016. Beyond networking opportunities and new knowledge gained at the conference, the participants were able to make site visits to career centers at US universities, including George Mason University, the University of Florida, and UC-Berkeley. As a result of the conference and site visits, the Philippine staff were able to develop and expand services offered by their career centers. The ability to view the operations of a US career center and select programs that would be most effective at their universities proved to be particularly valuable.

Each of the three centers developed a wide variety of new programs, established outreach to alumni, students, and industry, engaged in strategic planning, and improved location, staffing and services to better meet the needs of their students.

	<b>T.I.P.</b>	<b>UST</b>	<b>UI</b>
<b>Staffing</b>	T.I.P. hired a career center director at the start of the STRIDE engagement and continued to expand its capacity, hiring 10 more staff members over the course of the project	UST reorganized its existing counseling team to dedicate four staff members exclusively to career services.	The UI career center began with no dedicated staff. Over the course of the project two full-time staff were hired and UI leadership, including the Chief Operating Officer, provided direct oversight into the development of the center.
<b>Industry Engagement</b>	T.I.P. made industry engagement a priority, developing a database of partners, a ‘Circle of Employers’ to serve as an advisory council, employer speakers and information sessions,	UST career services began holding an annual career fair bringing more than 100 local employers to campus	By the final months of the engagement UI had developed a detailed approach to industry engagement, meeting with the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Iloilo, the Regional Job Placement Federation, and many others.



	and a major annual job fair.		
<b>Programs Developed</b>	The career center at T.I.P. developed more than 14 major initiatives during the project, including: <b>i) On-Campus Recruitment</b> <b>ii) Job Fairs</b> <b>iii) Alumni Networking</b> <b>iv) Industry/Business Engagement</b> <b>v) Career Advising</b> <b>vi) Mock Job Interviews</b>	UST developed several signature programs during the project, including: <b>i) the ThomGUTS program, a comprehensive approach to student development</b> <b>ii) Organizing a major annual career fair</b> <b>iii) a Career Ambassadors program utilizing student services to support career center activities</b>	Beginning with no developed programs, UI began several new initiatives, including: <b>i) a comprehensive alumni tracer study to gather data on employment rates</b> <b>ii) a student Career Ambassadors program</b> <b>iii) organization of UI’s existing on-the-job training (OJT) programs</b> <b>iv) a Student Success Program to improve confidence and develop a ‘winning’ mindset among students</b>

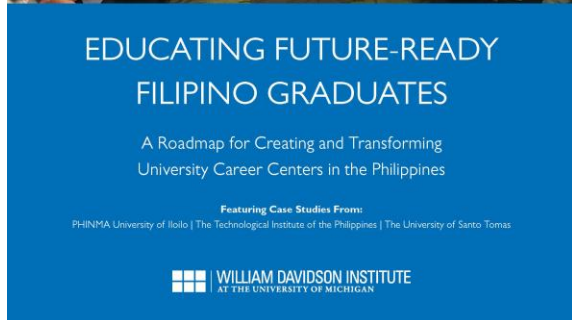
In part because of their rapid expansion and creation of a wide variety of services, the three model career centers started to become ‘benchmarking’ centers, with other Philippine universities consistently visiting to learn from the experiences of T.I.P., UST, and UI.



**T.I.P. staff member Conrado Navalta and U.S. expert Ms. Christine Cruzvergara in discussion with a representative from Ateneo de Manila University during the Career Center and Industry Forum**

To encourage the development of career services throughout the Philippines, WDI and STRIDE organized a career center and industry forum in March 2017. WDI’s career center experts and the directors of the three Philippine career centers led the two-day session, which was attended by a variety of employers and other universities. The objective of the forum was to showcase the successes of and progress made by the STRIDE partner centers and to discuss how career centers and employers in the Philippines can best engage and support each other following the conclusion of the STRIDE project.





**WDI worked with T.I.P., UST, and UI to write and publish a roadmap for career services**

five workshops throughout the country, in Cebu, Legazpi, and Manila. Attended by deans and school leadership from more than 100 universities, these workshops served again to highlight the importance of career services, the successes and standards set by the STRIDE partner centers, and provided practical ways universities could begin the process of establishing centers.

The engagement with the three STRIDE model career centers proved successful in improving academe-industry coordination, student preparedness to enter the workforce, and organization and strategic direction within each of the three universities. The potential exists for the career center model to positively impact universities throughout the Philippines, especially given the examples set by the three STRIDE model centers. Considering the resources invested, programs developed, and consistent leadership dedication to the project, the career services programs at T.I.P., UST, and UI will continue to improve the services offered to students and employers for the foreseeable future. As stated by Dr. Farouk Dey, “Tremendous progress has been achieved in the areas of student development, career preparation, employer development, alumni engagement, technology adoption, facilities, and continued visioning for the centers. This momentum will help the centers and institutions continue to move forward and determine the best approaches to serving the career needs of their students, employers, and campus communities.

To facilitate the benchmarking process and to continue to enable other universities to expand their career services initiatives, WDI and the Philippine career center partners developed a roadmap for career services. The roadmap serves as an outline for career centers in the Philippines to use when moving to establish career centers. Outlining the successes and challenges overcome by T.I.P., UST, and UI, the roadmap also provides expertise and guidance by one of the prominent experts in the field of career services, Dr. Farouk Dey. While the three STRIDE model career centers are established and will remain sustainable following the STRIDE project, the roadmap serves to support career services throughout the Philippines beyond the STRIDE-supported universities.

To promote the roadmap for career services and to continue to encourage the establishment of career centers throughout the Philippines, WDI and STRIDE, in partnership with the Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines (CHED) held

