



Philippine University Expands Connection with Industry through Career Services

In March, 2014, Dr. Frank Alejandrino arrived at the Technological Institute of the Philippines (T.I.P.) to take on his role as director of the new career center. The university's president, Dr. Beth Quirinho-Lahoz, had attended a workshop delivered a few weeks earlier on career services and had decided to establish a career center at T.I.P. The workshop was delivered as a part of the new USAID Science, Technology, Research, and Innovation for Development (STRIDE) project in partnership with the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan (WDI).

T.I.P. was started in 1962 with an enrollment of 2,400 students and currently enrolls more than 15,000. The university's objectives are: 1) to be a leading professional technological institution in the Philippines, and 2) to be an institution whose graduates contribute to the welfare of society. Serving students primarily from a lower-income background, the Institute focuses on the technology, engineering, mathematics, and business fields. T.I.P.'s excellent academic record is reflected in the fact that they are the only institution in the Philippine with 20 programs accredited by the U.S.-based Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET).



The President of T.I.P., Dr. Beth Quirinho-Lahoz (R) and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Cynthia Llanes (L) were instrumental in the establishment, oversight, and success of the T.I.P. career center

When Dr. Alejandrino arrived at T.I.P., he knew there was still significant work to be done. Shortly after he started,

T.I.P.'s new career center had been selected as one of three STRIDE model career centers and would receive support from WDI and two U.S.-based experts, Mr. Thomas Devlin (from University of California, Berkeley) and Dr. Farouk Dey (from Stanford University), over the course of the next three years. Despite this, Alejandrino knew that the overall success of the new career center would fall to him. With a degree in English, he had not studied counseling or career services, but he was eager to learn and confident that the T.I.P. center would be a success. He resolved to learn from the experts, use the resources available to him, and to start working immediately.

Within six months of his arrival, T.I.P. had hired a staff of 10, had completed construction of a new career service office on one of its two campuses, and had nearly completed construction on the second campus. Dr. Alejandrino had also done a significant amount of research and work to develop new programs for student development and alumni engagement.



Despite beginning without a career center facility or staff, Dr. Alejandrino quickly developed a high-functioning team and a dedicated career center building

The partnership with the U.S. experts and WDI included three site visits to T.I.P., during which the U.S. experts observed progress since the previous site visit, conducted training sessions and met with university leadership. Following the visits, they submitted reports with formal recommendations for Dr. Alejandrino and his staff. Following the first site visit, Mr. Devlin and Dr. Dey made several key recommendations for the development of the career center. Importantly, they recommended the development of a strategic plan for the career center, continued improvement of the organizational structure, enhancement of the on-the-job training (OJT) program, and the development of alumni and

student advisory boards. To expand on one of the recommendations, Mr. Devlin and Dr. Dey noted that “although most students are grateful for the experiences they have had during the OJT program, concerns have emerged as potential threats to its impact and effectiveness, most importantly that some OJT opportunities lack relevance to students’ academic training or appropriate rigor to properly challenge their on-going learning and development.” Mr. Devlin and Dr. Dey then recommended that Dr. Alejandrino and his team conduct additional background research to ensure that the OJT opportunities reflected the student’s education and expectations.”

Within a year, Dr. Alejandrino, in coordination with the T.I.P. President, Dr. Quirinho-Lahoz, had implemented and improved on each of these recommendations. A five-year strategic plan was developed through the year 2020, the organizational structure of the center was realigned to conform to the new strategic direction, and both alumni and student advisory boards were created. To address the OJT challenge and recommendations, Dr. Alejandrino and his team reviewed the existing practices and developed a new and comprehensive policy that addressed the problem and expanded on the recommendation provided by the U.S. experts. The new policy included a requirement for students to complete a pre-deployment orientation and training consisting of five modules to prepare them for the OJT experience. In addition, the companies hosting students were visited regularly by T.I.P. faculty to ensure that students were given challenging tasks in line with their field of study and abilities. Finally, students were required to submit regular reports detailing their experiences and, once they had completed their OJT, they were required to present their experiences to the next group of students.



In addition to managing the T.I.P. career center, Dr. Alejandrino has become a leader in the field of career services and T.I.P.'s story has been shared widely with universities in the Philippines

In June 2015, Dr. Alejandrino was invited by WDI to visit the U.S. for the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conference. During the conference, he connected with many career center directors and staff from U.S. universities and to attend workshops on various career services topics, such as industry engagement, alumni tracking, and internship management. In addition, following the conference, Dr. Alejandrino was able to visit Mr. Devlin at the University of California, Berkeley, and Dr. Dey at Stanford University. These site visits provided unique insights into how the U.S. experts operated their own career centers. While the context at T.I.P. is different from Stanford and UC-Berkeley,

Dr. Alejandrino was able to take many of the ideas and concepts learned during the trip and apply them to T.I.P.

During the final year of the project, having developed a vibrant career services team and office with improved services for students and alumni, Dr. Alejandrino and his team began to emphasize employer linkages. Based in part on recommendations made by Dr. Dey and Dr. Heather White (University of Florida), the T.I.P. team established a strategic plan for expanding the existing relationships with employers and for making new connections. The plan was centered on the creation of tiers in which to categorize each employer. For example, an employer who regularly participated in career center activities, accepted a large number of OJT students and actively interviewed graduates would fall into the top tier, while a new relationship or employer who maintained only basic contact would fall into a lower tier. This model allowed T.I.P. to manage these relationships, provide a level of service to each tier, and collect data from each employer based on specific indicators. Dr. Alejandrino and his team also stepped up their outreach to engage employers, invited speakers and interviewers to come to campus, and held a large annual job fair. The result was an influx of



During the roadmap workshops, Dr. Alejandrino's leadership and insight into the Philippine context was instrumental in promoting showing the effectiveness of a quality career center.



employers who visited campus, interviewed more students, and significant improvement of the communication and understanding between T.I.P. and employers. Dr. Alejandrino was even approached by several employers who, in addition to working with the career center, expressed interested in working with T.I.P. faculty to conduct research into product development.

As a part of his work, Dr. Alejandrino and the T.I.P. leadership team also effectively branded T.I.P. as a leader in the field of career services in the Philippines. As a result of this successful branding, more than 50 universities have visited T.I.P. to benchmark, see T.I.P.'s facilities and view some of their programs. The T.I.P. career center has even hosted visitors from outside the Philippines, including a university in Singapore.

During the final months of the STRIDE project, to record the successes experienced by the STRIDE model career centers and to provide other universities in the Philippines with guidance on how to establish a career center, WDI, T.I.P., and the other STRIDE model career centers published a roadmap for career services. Based on his experience at T.I.P., Dr. Alejandrino wrote a chapter of the roadmap outlining T.I.P. career center's story. In addition to publication of the roadmap, WDI, STRIDE, and the Philippine Commission on Higher Education partnered to conduct a series of workshops presenting the roadmap to other career centers. Dr. Alejandrino played a leadership role in three of the five workshops, held in Cebu and Manila, and the T.I.P. career center also hosted one workshop. During the presentations, Dr. Alejandrino discussed T.I.P.'s experience and effectively fielded questions related to industry engagement, starting a career center, the positive impact a well-functioning center can have on a university, and challenges T.I.P. has faced during the process. Indicative of his dedication to the career center, Dr. Alejandrino concluded by remarking that "In sum, by exploring this development of career centers in the changing landscape of Higher Education, Philippine Higher Education Institutions can become truly transformative."

"The career center continues to benefit from the utmost level of support from T.I.P.'s leadership, which has accelerated its growth and paved the way for many successes early in the STRIDE project. Such successes include rapid growth of employer partners, fast adoption of the career center's offerings by students and faculty, development of state-of-the-arts facilities and technology, and successfully branding T.I.P. as a leading career center model in the Philippines and the region. In any career center institutional support is the most significant contributor to success and this has proven true here. In fact, the institutional support that T.I.P.'s career center has received should serve as a model for career centers in the U.S. and around the world."

*Dr. Farouk Dey
Associate Vice Provost and Dean of
Experiential Education
Stanford University*





Under Dr. Alejandrino’s leadership and the continued support of his administration, the T.I.P. career center will continue to effectively serve the student body and support the university’s ongoing engagement with industry and employers. As stated by Dr. Quirinho-Lahoz, “Career centers illustrate how the classic aim of education, which is to transform students, can be optimally attained. I personally believe that schools, to be truly transformative, have to holistically mold students not only inside, but also outside the classroom. This can be done by providing students opportunities, experiences, and connections way beyond the usual realm of possibilities in higher education.”