



Career Center Develops Programs and Services for Student Body of 40,000

In early 2014, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) operated a large counseling office led by Dr. Lucila Bance that was dedicated to providing counseling services to UST's large student body. Located in the heart of Manila, UST is the oldest existing university in Southeast Asia, having opened in 1611. It is also one of the largest Catholic schools in the world with more than 40,000 undergraduate students and is one of the prominent universities in the Philippines with a well-respected curriculum, especially in the fields of science and education.

Dr. Bance had been considering how to incorporate career services operations into the Counseling Center when she was invited to a career center workshop and assessment conducted by USAID's new Science, Technology, Research, and Innovation for Development (STRIDE) project in partnership with the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan (WDI). The training provided Dr. Bance and other university leaders with an overview of the field of career services and also sought to assess the capacity of Philippine universities to establish their own career centers. At the end of the three-day training, universities were invited to apply for a partnership with STRIDE and WDI to establish a model career center. While at the time UST's Counseling Center effectively offered one-on-one counseling support to students, it did not work with corporate partners outside the university or alumni and did not provide any career counseling services. UST applied and was one of three universities accepted to the WDI program.

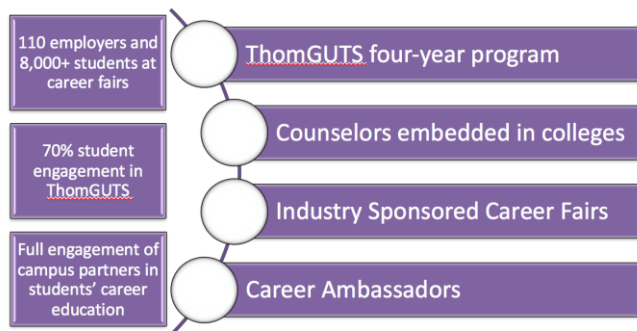


Dr. Lucila Bance led UST's Career and Counseling Center and led development of a variety of new programs for UST's large student body

After beginning the partnership with WDI, UST was partnered with two U.S. career services experts, Mr. Joe Testani and Ms. Christine Cruzvergara. Mr. Testani and Ms. Cruzvergara made an initial visit to UST in October 2014 to see the Counseling Center and make recommendations to support Dr. Bance as she and her staff added career services programs and responsibilities to the Counseling Center's portfolio. During their visit they provided advice on how to reorganize the counseling center to accommodate the changes and suggested several new programs that could be created to increase industry engagement and provide services for students.

During the following year, Dr. Bance and her team worked diligently to implement the recommendations made by Mr. Testani and Ms. Cruzvergara and began a variety of new programs, including a Career Ambassadors program to incorporate students into the career center's operations, adjustments to the structure of the center and renaming it the Counseling and Career Center, and holding a university-wide career fair to engage with local companies.

Career Education Innovations at UST



The UST Career Services team developed programs designed to effectively work with industry partners, alumni, and students

One of the biggest challenges faced by Dr. Bance and her team was trying to effectively meet the needs of a large portion of students given the size of the UST student body. While UST's Counseling Center operated with a large office and 40 staff, the team was required to meet the needs of UST's students and the primary method of engagement was one-on-one counseling. When UST began to introduce new career services programs, staff and facilities were

increasingly required to take on new responsibilities. To meet this challenge, Dr. Bance and her team developed several new programs to more efficiently use staff time. Among the most innovative programs developed was the Thomasian Gear Up Tools for Success (ThomGUTS) program. Designed as a comprehensive roadmap for all UST students, ThomGUTS provides guidance and events for students during each year of their four-year degree. From their first year of the program students are introduced to career concepts such as the importance of planning and making connections, and by their final year they are prepared for on-the-job training programs, interviews, and leadership roles in their chosen field upon graduation.

In October 2015 Mr. Testani and Ms. Cruzvergara conducted a second site visit to UST to follow up on their earlier recommendations and provide additional training for UST staff. Mr. Testani and Ms. Cruzvergara were impressed at the variety of new programs developed and the way Dr. Bance and her team had quickly made changes. Despite the progress, the U.S. experts continued to recommend that the center make further structural changes so that staff could fulfill their roles with regards to career services along with their counseling responsibilities. Specifically, they recommended that some staff be dedicated to form a career services team. They envisioned that this select career center team would be independent from the counseling team and would have no counseling responsibilities. The experts also provided training sessions for the UST team and recommended that Dr. Bance try to provide additional training for staff, many of whom were new to the field of career services.



“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 to 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. Agnes Bonifacio
University of Santo Tomas*

One training opportunity that occurred during the following year was the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conference held in Chicago, IL in June 2016, which was attended by Ms. Agnes Bonifacio and Ms. Monica de Leon. Sponsored by WDI, Ms. Bonifacio and Ms. de Leon had the opportunity to meet with other career center directors and staff and to attend sessions on topics related to career services including development of programs at universities with large numbers of students, efficient use of staff and personnel time, and improving industry engagement. Following the conference they visited Mr. Testani’s career center at the University of Rochester.

During the final year of the project, Dr. Bance participated in the WDI-sponsored Career Center Forum, a gathering of the three STRIDE model career centers, leaders from other universities in the Philippines, and industry representatives. During the forum Dr. Bance presented UST’s successes and lessons learned during the preceding three years. She was also able to take a leadership role in writing a roadmap for career services developed by WDI to provide guidance for other universities interested in establishing their own career centers. Dr. Bance’s input into the roadmap and forum were invaluable, especially for large Philippine universities that also face the need to develop programs for a large student body.

As the project came to a close, Dr. Bance also emphasized additional training for her staff, especially Ms. Stephanie Lu and Ms. Christine Quito. During the final months of the engagement WDI conducted a series of workshops designed to provide leaders at Philippine universities with the tools and resources to develop their own career centers. At these workshops, Ms. Lu and Ms. Quito played prominent leadership roles, leading training sessions on career services and facilitating Q&A sessions.

Following the workshops, UST adjusted the structure of the Counseling and Career Center by assigning four staff solely to the career center. Led by Ms. Lu, the career center at UST now has its own space and will be able to more effectively manage the career services programs UST has developed over the course of the STRIDE project. During the final site visit to UST, Ms. Cruzvergara and Mr. Testani noted that, “it is clear that the dedicated resources and the formalized Career Center office at UST will continue to be a model of career services in the Philippines. UST can now also provide technical support for other Philippine university career centers to effectively engage with industry.”

