



doi: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcrar.2024.1206.015>

Role of Alumni Network in Career Growth of Students in Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

There are various decisions that a child takes in its life. One of them is deciding for which career they are going to pursue. The aspirations give them direction into what educational choices they make and streams they select. At the time of pursuing degree in higher educational institutions they are faced with various options to choose for employment. At this phase, this study tries to understand through literature review that how the alumni could help them in making appropriate career choice. The role an alumnus plays in the growth of students in relation to career.

Article Info

Received: 20 April 2024

Accepted: 29 May 2024

Available Online: 20 June 2024

Keywords

Student, Career, Alumni, Higher education institutions.

Introduction

In today's world, just getting a degree from a college or university isn't always enough to ensure a successful career. Students need more than just good grades; they need guidance, real-world experiences, and connections in their chosen fields. This is where alumni networks come into play. Alumni are former students who have graduated and are now working in various professions. These alumni can be a valuable resource for current students, helping them to navigate their career paths.

Alumni networks act like a bridge between students and the professional world. They can offer advice, help students find internships and jobs, and share insights about what it's really like to work in different industries. Because alumni have been in the same situation as

current students, their guidance can be especially relevant and helpful.

This paper aims to review existing research on the role of alumni networks in helping students with their careers. By looking at various studies and reports, we will identify common themes, successful strategies. The goal is to provide a clear understanding of how alumni networks can aid in career development and to offer suggestions for colleges and universities on how to make the most of these networks.

To answer the questions, how the alumni could help them in making appropriate career choice; and the role an alumnus plays in the growth of students in relation to career. After going through the literature, the findings found were as mentioned in the next section.

In this paper the terms mean as follows:

Alumni Network: Refers to the community of graduates from an institution who often remain connected with each other and the institution. These networks can provide valuable resources, mentorship, job opportunities, and industry insights to current students.

Career Growth: This term encompasses the progression and development of a student's professional life, including obtaining internships, jobs, promotions, skill development, and overall career advancement.

Higher Educational Institutions: These are post-secondary institutions such as universities, colleges, and technical institutes that offer advanced education and degrees.

Role of Alumni in Career Growth of Students

Alumni play a crucial role in the career growth of students by providing mentorship, industry connections, and ongoing support. Research emphasizes the significance of alumni mentorship in enhancing learning experiences, increasing student engagement, improving academic performance, and facilitating career development (Bhattacharya, 2024). The digitization of the Alumni sector through systems like the Alumni Information System (AIS) offers efficient solutions for managing graduate students' progress, connecting them with job opportunities, and improving their career success (Rista, *et al.*, 2023; Rista *et al.*, 2024).

Facilitate job placements for current students

Alumni networks facilitate job placements for current students by helping in various mechanisms of assistance and are often more effective than other job placement resources as discussed below:

Mechanisms of Assistance: Alumni networks facilitate job placements through various mechanisms such as job referrals, recommendations, and direct hiring within their organizations. They often share job openings through alumni platforms, social media, and institutional career services. Additionally, alumni may host or participate in career fairs and networking events where they can connect directly with students.

Effectiveness Compared to Other Resources: Alumni networks are often more effective than other job placement resources due to the personal connections and

trust inherent in these relationships. Alumni can provide insider information about job openings and company cultures that other resources, like job boards or career counselors, might not offer. Moreover, the endorsement from a respected alumnus can carry significant weight with hiring managers.

Mentoring and guiding students in their career choices

Alumni mentors guide students in their career choices by sharing their experiences, giving advice, helping with resumes and interviews, and connecting students to job opportunities, which boosts students' confidence and career readiness.

Influence on Career Decisions: Alumni mentors help students make career decisions by sharing their own experiences and offering advice. They help students understand different career paths, choose the right courses, and stay updated on industry trends. Alumni mentors also help students set realistic career goals and make plans to achieve them.

Mentoring Practices and Impact: Alumni mentors often meet with students one-on-one, review their resumes, conduct mock interviews, and help with career planning. They also share their professional connections, which can be very valuable. This kind of mentoring helps students gain confidence, clarity, and direction in their careers. It can also lead to internships and job opportunities as mentors may recommend students to their own networks.

Help students develop skills and get ready for their careers

Interacting with alumni helps students learn key skills, gain real-world experience, and get ready for jobs, making them more confident and better prepared for their careers.

Skill Development: Interacting with alumni helps students develop important skills like communication, networking, and industry-specific abilities. Alumni share their knowledge through workshops, webinars, and guest lectures, giving students practical insights and real-world experience.

Workforce Readiness: Being involved in alumni network activities makes students more prepared for the workforce. Through mentoring and networking events,

students learn professional behaviour, understand industry standards, and build confidence. Feedback from alumni on resumes and interviews helps students improve their skills and become better job candidates. Research shows that students who engage with alumni are better prepared to start their careers.

Characteristics of alumni (e.g., industry, job position, level of engagement) affect their influence on student

The characteristics of alumni significantly impact their influence:

Industry Expertise: Alumni working in industries relevant to students' career goals are more likely to provide valuable insights and connections.

Job Position: Alumni in higher-level positions or those with substantial experience can offer more strategic advice and open doors to advanced opportunities.

Level of Engagement: Active alumni who regularly participate in network activities and mentoring are more effective in supporting students compared to less engaged alumni.

Strategies for Higher Educational Institutions to Enhance the Impact of Alumni on Student Career Growth

Leveraging alumni as educational resources throughout the alumni work process and establishing strong cooperation between universities and alumni are essential for continuously enhancing the quality of personnel training and providing a solid social foundation for educational institutions (Ning, 2020). Higher educational institutions can enhance the impact of alumni on student career growth through various strategies.

Implementing Alumni Information Systems (AIS) can digitize alumni sectors, providing efficient solutions for managing graduate progress and fostering university-business connections (Rista *et al.*, 2024). Aligning academic courses with industry needs, offering mentorship, and promoting industry-academia cooperation are crucial for preparing students for the evolving job market (Kayyali, 2024).

Curriculum adjustments, establishment of career development units, and expanding networks of partners are effective strategies identified in Indonesia to enhance

graduates' career sustainability (Isbah *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, developing coherent employability strategies that go beyond intended targets and involve alumni in institutional functioning can significantly impact student career growth (Sgobbi, 2023). By combining these strategies, higher educational institutions can create a supportive environment that maximizes the influence of alumni on student career development.

Develop Structured Alumni Mentorship Programs

Create Formal Mentorship Programs: Establish structured mentorship programs that match current students with alumni based on career interests, academic disciplines, and professional goals.

Provide Training for Mentors: Offer training for alumni mentors to ensure they understand their roles and can effectively guide students.

Leverage Technology for Enhanced Connectivity

Build or Improve Alumni Platforms: Develop user-friendly online platforms where alumni and students can connect, share job opportunities, and engage in virtual networking events.

Utilize Social Media: Encourage alumni to use social media channels for networking, mentorship, and sharing industry insights.

Organize Regular Networking Events

Host Alumni Networking Events: Plan regular in-person or virtual events where students can meet and interact with alumni from various industries.

Create Industry-Specific Panels and Workshops: Organize events tailored to specific fields or industries, providing students with targeted advice and insights.

Enhance Alumni Communication and Engagement

Regular Updates and Newsletters: Send out regular newsletters to keep alumni informed about campus events, student achievements, and networking opportunities.

Engage Alumni Through Surveys and Feedback: Regularly solicit feedback from alumni to understand their needs and preferences for engagement.

Integrate Alumni into Curriculum and Career Services

Incorporate Alumni into Classes: Invite alumni to guest lecture, participate in panel discussions, or conduct workshops that relate to their professional experiences.

Collaborate with Career Services: Work closely with career services to integrate alumni into career counselling and job placement activities.

Recognize and Reward Alumni Contributions

Celebrate Alumni Achievements: Publicly acknowledge and celebrate alumni achievements through awards, features in publications, and social media highlights.

Offer Incentives for Engagement: Provide incentives for alumni who actively participate in mentoring, networking, or other supportive activities.

In conclusion, alumni networks play a pivotal role in enhancing the career growth of students in higher educational institutions. They facilitate job placements through personal connections and referrals, offering a more effective resource compared to traditional job placement methods. Alumni mentoring significantly influences students' career decisions by providing personalized guidance and industry insights. Engaging with alumni also boosts students' skill development and professional readiness, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application. To maximize these benefits, institutions should implement best practices such as structured mentorship programs, networking events, and online platforms for engagement. Tailoring strategies to the unique needs of students and alumni can further enhance the impact of these networks. By leveraging the strengths of alumni networks, educational institutions can better support their students' transition into successful professional careers.

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How to cite this article:

Kanchan Kumari. 2024. Role of Alumni Network in Career Growth of Students in Higher Educational Institutions. *Int.J.Curr.Res.Aca.Rev.* 12(6), 121-124. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcrar.2024.1206.015>