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Alumni Relationship Management
by a University of Tourism
in the Context of a Practically-profiled Curriculum

Abstract. *In today's Poland, the higher education market compels university administrators to come up with new and innovative ways to govern their institutions. To be able to cope with this challenge, they need to know as much as possible about their universities' stakeholders and have a perfect understanding of stakeholder relationship management. The paper discusses university stakeholder relationships in terms stakeholder groups and stakeholder management tools, with a special focus on alumni as the group that increasingly centers the attention of universities implementing practically-profiled curricula. The paper seeks to identify relationships that a university has with its stakeholders and to apply relevant relationship management approaches to specific stakeholder groups. In doing so, it looks at how higher education institutions currently manage their alumni relationships and attempts to suggest improvements in that respect. To address the research problem of whether, and to what extent, an institution's concentration on the delivery of tourism programs affects its alumni relationships, the author makes extensive use of analysis, synthesis, and primary research.*

Keywords: *alumni, university stakeholders, relationship management, practically-profiled curriculum*

Introduction

For more than a few years now, Poland's higher education sector has been immersed in a complex and dynamic environment, among a dazzling blend

of trends, developments, frameworks and marketplaces that make up the context for its operations [Dawidziuk 2011: 34]. The continually evolving legal, social and economic environment poses new challenges for more than 450 higher education institutions, both public and private, that are present in Poland's market. K. Mazurek-Łopacińska and M. Sobocińska name the following major challenges facing these institutions [Mazurek-Łopacińska, Sobocińska 2011: 10]:

– challenges relating to university governance,

– challenges relating to internal policy toward the performance of research and educational functions,

– challenges relating to toughening competition in the market,

– challenges relating to funding schemes available to higher education institutions,

– challenges relating to unfavorable demographic trends that might affect institutions of higher learning.

Those investigating the higher education services market contend that, in the context of these multiple challenges, higher education institutions must strive to foster positive, trust-based and lasting links with different groups found in their environment [Mazurek-Łopacińska, Sobocińska 2011: 10-11]. It should be therefore emphasized that stakeholder relationship management is becoming a vital issue for institutions of higher learning, given the increasingly common economic-managerial approach to the operations and development of higher education institutions in Poland.

The research objective of this paper is to identify university stakeholder relationships and the stakeholder group breakdown alongside the methodological toolkit for effective management of these relationships, and to evaluate the approaches that higher education institutions currently take toward developing alumni relationships, suggesting improvements to the way that specific tools are applied. The research problem was put forth as the question whether, and to what extent, an institution's concentration on the delivery of tourism programs affects its relationships with alumni. To address the question, the author made use of analysis, synthesis, and primary research. In the empirical portion of the research, questionnaire and interview techniques were used to address the research problem. The questionnaire survey employed two electronic online questionnaires: one targeted at alumni, and the other – at university staff. The online questionnaires were designed using the docs.google tool supplied by Google. Experts were interviewed using a direct interview technique based on a standardized questionnaire. The survey was conducted between September and November 2013, and the survey sample consisted of three cohorts: alumni – 361 graduates from second- or long-cycle programs who earned the Master's degree from a Polish higher education institution; higher education institutions – 71 public and private institutions based in Poland; and experts – 15 knowledgeable individuals elected from amongst those with profound insights into, and hands-on

experience of, the functioning of higher education institutions in Poland. The survey was focused on alumni relationship management practices pursued by institutions of higher learning.

1. University stakeholder relationship management – actors and tools involved

In English-language literature, the practice of shaping university relationships with its environment is referred to as a strategy for managing the interactions between a higher education institution and its stakeholders in an organized fashion that involves analyzing, planning and designing [Pausits 2013: 90]. In Polish-language literature on the subject, A. Drapińska defines relationships management as a continuous and long-term process whereby a higher education institution builds relationships with its partners in the environment (students, businesses, public authorities, sponsors, etc.) through joint value creation in a way that ensures that all parties to the process achieve their objectives [Drapińska 2011: 149].

In the higher education services market, the notion of relationship may stand for links between a higher education institution and its stakeholders that are supposed to bring benefits to both parties through interactive, individualized and value-oriented process that unfolds in the long-term. To be able to flourish, a university's relationships with actors in its environment need to be competently managed. Namely, institutions have to plan, organize, motivate, and monitor the relationship management process. The planning stage relates to deciding which stakeholder groups are strategically relevant. It is important to set goals for establishing ties with actors in the environment and determine performance measures for their assessment. At the organization stage, a university needs to choose what sort and forms of relationships are to be created and maintained. The management function, involving staff motivation and leadership, is about identifying factors that can stimulate personnel for delivering better performance and putting a system in place that takes care of providing the right incentives and stimuli. A university's ability to attain its objectives in terms of stakeholder relationship management hinges on the skills and commitment of responsible staff. The control process, in turn, involves ongoing monitoring and review of stakeholder relationships. Monitoring and observation of the behavior of actors in the university's environment is clearly what makes it possible to identify and understand stakeholders' needs and expectations. Importantly, it is at the control stage that the outcomes should be analyzed and benchmarked against the objectives envisioned at the planning stage.

Table 1. Overview of actors in a higher education institution's environment – institutional stakeholders

Institutional stakeholder	Type of relationship	Stakeholder expectations	Sample relationship management measures and tools
Ministry of Science and Higher Education	formal (governed by administrative law)	– compliance with applicable laws – contribution to national growth through human capital development (via education), laying foundations for growth (via research), popularization and dissemination of knowledge	– attainment of strategic goals – reasonable deployment of financial, human and material resources
National Accreditation Board	formal (governed by administrative law)	– improving the quality of instruction – aiming at educational standards observed in the European Education Area and in the global higher education context	– active role of an institutional body for quality of instruction – use of benchmarking in university governance – student and alumni surveys – class observation
Providers of public co-funding (NCN, NCBiR)	formal (governed by administrative law)	– efficient use of funding allocated for research activity – pursuit of the objectives of government policy on research, technology and innovation – creating a platform for effective dialog between research and business communities	– supporting and motivating faculty to apply for funding – publishing calls for domestic and international research project proposals addressed to teams and individuals
Other government institutions (Tax Office, Social Insurance Institution, Police)	formal (governed by administrative law)	– disclosure of relevant information and optimizing information flows	– upgrading the skills of administrative staff – training courses and sessions
Local governments (and local government organizations)	organizational (collaborative partnership)	– cooperation and partnership for regional development – educating workforce for the local and regional labor market – embracement of corporate social responsibility	– joint undertakings promoting the regional education sector – engaging academic staff in joint projects – providing expert opinions and sectoral studies – involving local government officials in lecturing to provide exposure to first-hand experience as part of the curriculum

Media: internet, TV, radio, press	organizational (collaboration involving supply of reliable and marketable information)	– maintaining a professional mindset and attitude in interacting with media	– an online pressroom for contact with media – producing press releases for use by mass media – university image and reputation management
Secondary schools	market-driven	– assisting young people in making the choice of study program by showcasing their range of higher education products	– workshops and training courses run by university student societies and academic associations for the benefit of secondary school students – lectures, workshops and debates led by faculty in secondary schools – organization of events such as open days and campus tours featuring lectures, workshops, and quizzes – joint organization of science contests to promote higher learning – launching postgraduate courses designed for teachers
Employers	organizational (collaborative partnership)	– delivery of research and development services – commercialization of research results – increasing availability of qualified workforce – embodying employer opinions and recommendations in curriculum and instructional design	– collaboration in increasing graduate employability – addition of an advisory body consisting of practitioners and influential politicians to university organizational structures – offering internships and work placements – including business practitioners as faculty members – classes led by employers – creating incentives for faculty to undergo in-service training in businesses – organization of scientific conferences to bring together academics and practitioners – provision of training and personal development services to local workforce – supporting academic enterprise – co-hosting job fairs – setting up career services
Businesses (banks, service providers)	market-driven	– making timely payments – growth financing – service delivery	– effective university finance management – policy on loan financing for development and innovation – infrastructural development

Table 1 – cont.

Institutional stakeholder	Type of relationship	Stakeholder expectations	Sample relationship management measures and tools
Professional associations	organizational (collaborative partnership)	– proposing, conducting and supporting initiatives at industry level	– conference organization – on-campus promotional events
Partner universities (domestic and international)	organizational (collaborative partnership)	– involvement in joint educational and research projects – joint promotion and organization of conferences and seminars – forming associations to safeguard common interests – exchanging information on organizational and functional know-how and on current developments at institutional level	– bilateral agreements under the Erasmus program for student mobilities (the most common form of student involvement in the Erasmus program are exchanges between participating countries. Students may apply for two types of mobilities: one allowing them to complete a part of their study at a foreign partner institution of higher learning, and the other – to serve a work placement at an organization based in a foreign participating country – bilateral agreements under the Erasmus program for administrative and teaching staff mobilities – agreements on student mobility, such as e.g. MOST (MOST is a student exchange program drawing on the principles developed under the Socrates Program) – allowing access to academic degree award procedures – attendance at conferences, seminars, etc. – facilitating informal networking among staff, holding staff get-togethers
Competitor universities (domestic and international)	market-driven	– gaining a competitive edge in the market	– use of marketing-mix instruments (educational products, price, service distribution, promotion, faculty) – research grants – acquisition of EU funding – employing high-potential research staff – providing professional development opportunities for staff

Source: own.

Table 2. Overview of actors in a higher education institution's environment – social stakeholders

Social stakeholder	Type of relationship	Stakeholder expectations	Sample relationship management measures and tools
Higher education candidates and their families (including secondary school leavers)	market-driven	– supplying information on educational services offered	– involving secondary school leavers in special on-campus programs – launching free-of-charge preparation courses for the maturity (secondary school-leaving) exam – communicating with young people through education fairs – generating leads to feed e-mailing databases – soliciting participation in contests run through social networking sites – including a dedicated candidate tab (section) in the university website
Higher education students and their families	social as well as market-driven	– marketing attractive educational products – starting and completing a higher education program – learning and qualifications earned for good job prospects – fostering personal development	– induction events (tutorials) to integrate freshman students into university life – approaching students as partners – flexible class scheduling allowing students to tailor schedules to their preferences – state-of-the-art equipment and facilities – conducting marketing surveys to inquire into students' needs and expectations – effective student information systems – providing opportunities to pursue passions and interests – recognizing and backing up student initiatives – holding attractive student-centered events – training university staff in the delivery of professional student services – introducing innovations to streamline paperwork and formal procedures – engaging industry experts in teaching
Alumni and their families	social	– collaboration between higher education institutions and employers – supporting alumni in the job market – building a strong reputation of degrees awarded by the higher education institution	– forming alumni associations and clubs – setting up alumni programs – holding meetings to enable professional networking – building up the university graduate's reputation among employers – using PR instruments to promote graduates in the job market
Faculty, research staff and administrative staff	social	– commensurate salary – employer's prestige – quality of working conditions – professional development	– allotting funds to conferences and publications – training staff to upgrade their professional skills

Source: own.

An overview of university relationship management actors and tools is provided in two descriptive tables. Table 1 shows the institutional stakeholder group, while Table 2 describes the social stakeholder group. The type of relationships existing between a higher education institution and each of its stakeholders is indicated, the expectations of each stakeholder group are outlined, and examples of relationship management measures and tools are given.

A review of the actor groups in a university's environment demonstrates that there are a variety of relationships binding higher education institutions to specific stakeholder groups. Among institutional stakeholders, formal (i.e. governed by administrative law), organizational (collaborative partnership or cooperation involving the supply of reliable and marketable information) and market-driven relationships are prevalent (cf. Table 1).

Key insights afforded by an analysis of social stakeholders are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 demonstrates that social stakeholders are tied to the university chiefly by social bonds and less so through interaction in the market.

Each of the stakeholder groups regards and evaluates a higher education institution through the lens of their specific expectations, and their judgments of the institution's role in their individual settings are dependent on the extent to which their expectations are met. Hence, higher education institutions undertake a number of efforts and employ a variety of instruments to satisfy the needs of their stakeholders.

It is envisaged that collaboration with the stakeholder groups listed above will be particularly relevant to higher education institutions that have chosen to run practically-profiled programs,[1] a condition that is strongly attributable to the unique demands that the tourism market demonstrably puts on the competences of university graduates – the future workforce in the tourism industry.[2]

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[1] Act of July 27, 2005 Law on Higher Education, Art. 2, p. 3. Under the Law, a practically--profiled study program is one comprising modules geared to training students in practical skills and social competences, satisfying the requirement that practically-focused courses developing these skills and competences, including skill development workshops, represent a majority of the program content, as indicated by ECTS points, and are led by persons having work experience earned outside higher education.

[2] An extensive treatment is given to the education and training of workforce for the tourism industry in such publications as: Panasiuk (ed.) 2008; Fedyk, Paliga 2012: 141-154; Pstrocka-Rak 2012: 213-226.

2. Alumni and their role in the stakeholder structure
in light of research

Studies focusing on university stakeholders lead to the observation that, besides actors traditionally entrenched in the higher education environment, new important players are coming into view, such as employers and graduates, and that the management of alumni relationships have become particularly relevant in the face of two concurrent and interlinked trends affecting the higher education sector in Poland: first, the demographic low that, notably after 2015, diminished the population of higher education candidates [GUS 2010: 170], and second, the embracement of the idea of lifelong learning by society, which is where institutions of higher learning certainly have a role to play.

However, strategies of Polish higher education institutions do not pay much attention to either the forms of interaction or to building long-term relationships with alumni, even though the experiences of many reputable U.S. and European universities prove that these relationships definitely bear on the institution's image and position in the educational market as well as in the job market [Mael, Ashforth 1992: 103-123]. A broad review of Polish university websites indicates that there are but a few higher education institutions that have really intensified measures targeted at alumni and opened up to communicating with them.[3]

Empirical studies conducted in 2013 and involving three groups of respondents – higher education graduates ($n = 361$), higher education institutions ($n = 79$), and higher education experts ($n = 15$) – revealed that all of them considered it important for a university to sustain links with alumni.[4] Nevertheless, what Polish

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[3] Higher education institutions that have put alumni relationship programs in place include e.g. the Kozminski University (Akademia Leona Koźmińskiego) with an operational Alumni Relationship Office since March 2009; the Nicolaus Copernicus University (NCU) in Toruń (Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu) whose Centre for Promotion and Information initiated to uphold the NCU's relationships and collaboration with alumni in February 2001. The NCU Alumni Programme was launched to form and maintain bonds between the NCU and its alumni. The Program functions outside the existing Alumni Association and is part of the University's forward-looking strategy; the Warsaw School of Economics (Szkoła Główna Handlowa w Warszawie – SGH), where an Alumni Office was established in May 2010 as a response to an increasingly visible need for furthering links between the SGH and its alumni and to meet the growing demand from alumni themselves for cooperation with their Alma Mater in different areas and at different levels; the Lazarski University (Uczelnia Łazarskiego w Warszawie) that started its Alumni Club in 2010. The Club aims to create a network for the sharing and exchange of information, resources, support and opportunities among professionally active alumni, and to strengthen ties between the University and its alumni, forming a sort of advocacy group.

[4] The full characteristics of the survey sample, as well as the detailed findings, are given in the doctoral thesis by A. Krajewska-Smardz entitled "University alumni relationship management" and developed under the supervision of Prof. M. Pluta-Olearnik at the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the Wrocław University of Economics.

universities do in that respect was not found satisfactory by the alumni surveyed. More than a half of the alumni respondents appreciated the fact that, during their time at university, their institutions were open to student initiatives. Students were primarily encouraged to engage in the activities of academic societies and student unions. In addition, higher education institutions would muster the aid of students in organizing a variety of on-campus events (e.g. conferences, inauguration and graduation ceremonies). However, that did not translate to closer links after graduation. 77% of the alumni surveyed admitted to no contact whatsoever with their former universities, while 23% of the respondents said that the relationships were limited to periodic mailing – delivering up-to-date course offerings and invitations to take part in alumni career surveys or join the alumni association.

At the same time, 92% of the university staff insist that their institution does track alumni career paths. Although the percentage is fairly high, it should be realized that it covers both institutions that run solid, regular surveys and those that make sporadic research efforts. Higher education experts, on the other hand, believe that probing alumni regularly for information on their career paths will have a tangible effect on the development trajectories of Polish higher education institutions. Therefore, they suggest that universities need to attempt a more proactive attitude toward alumni relationships, perceiving their impact on the perception of quality of instruction at a given institution and taking notice of their significance in the context of the constantly evolving labor market determinants and employer expectations that higher education institutions have to raise to.

In assessing the alumni relationship management methods that higher education institutions have hitherto used, one is bound to say that most of them are not interested in alumni beyond their career tracking. Only 19% of the institutions surveyed have implemented special alumni-centered programs. Yet alumni visibly expect much more. The survey findings demonstrate that they would be more than willing to engage in closer relationships if only their universities created the right opportunities for them, such as personal and professional development projects, an option to consult their tutors about job-related concerns, discounts on postgraduate courses, or support in job seeking.

Furthermore, the findings are indicative of a very good perception that the alumni have of their universities. Most of them made no explicitly negative comments and saw their institutions as large, prestigious, employing accomplished scholars, and friendly toward students. The brand attributes that they valued the most were quality of instruction, faculty, and curricula.

A vast majority (77%) of the alumni respondents have a sense of identification with their university, enjoying the prestige that its degree gives them in their place of work and living. They also appreciate the professional training

that they have received and the good job prospects in the labor market upon graduation. However, one in four alumni does not feel part of their university and does not hold it in high esteem, thinking low of the quality of teaching that it provides, being disappointed with the little effort that it takes to earn a degree and frustrated at their stuck careers or the fact that the university did not give them the kind of education that would make a difference in the job market. The survey showed that the alumni make contact with their universities incidentally and by chance (30% of the responses). At the same time, though, one out of four alumni visits the university website. This is an important clue for higher education institutions that intend to adopt an alumni relationship management concept and embark on building links with the alumni who graduated some time ago.[5] Admittedly, the official website appears instrumental in communicating with alumni.

For a higher education institution to be able to sustain lasting relationships with its alumni, it is necessary to keep communicating with them. The survey respondents expect to be contacted by their university at least twice a year. In their opinion, the most effective media that a higher education institution can use to communicate with alumni and build up relationships with them include e-mail and social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), whilst the least effective are newsletters and alumni news periodicals.

The alumni relationship management tools that the respondents saw as most effective would be as follows: promoting graduates in the job market, offering discounts on postgraduate courses or assistance in job search, launching a dedicated alumni website, holding free thematic lectures and workshops. What they regarded as least effective was e.g. sending holiday greeting cards and invitations for academic ceremonies and events.

By way of summary to this discussion of the relationships between higher education institutions and their alumni, it should be underscored that alumni relationship management can only be expected to bring measurable benefits in the long term. Based on feedback from alumni, statements by university officials and the opinions of higher education experts, further changes are to be anticipated in the ways that higher education institutions interact with their alumni as they evolve toward the application of professional techniques to building, maintaining and developing alumni relationships as well as to monitoring their effects. What can be seen at the moment as the key barriers to fully embracing the idea of alumni relationship management is underfunding and the reluctance of executives to engage in initiatives that are not likely to produce immediate benefits.

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[5] The pertinent university alumni relationship management model was published in the author's Ph.D. thesis.

Benefits from alumni relationships vs. practically-profiled curricula at institutions running higher education programs targeted at the tourism industry

At the moment of this writing, there are 78 higher education institutions in Poland offering tourism and recreation programs [Wiadomości Turystyczne; Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki 2010: 320]. It is for these institutions, emphasizing the practical aspect of education and running practically-profiled curricula, that alumni relationship management becomes particularly relevant. A practical-profile curriculum stands for combining theoretical grounding given by the university with professional training delivered in business settings, where the work placement provider acts as an equal partner in the education process. Students therefore receive instruction both on university premises and on-the-job, pursuing a program agreed by the educational partners and hence meeting employers' real needs [Uniwersytet Opolski]. Work placement follows a detailed schedule and lasts throughout the duration of the university course. The practical study profile promulgated by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education turns out to be largely similar to what has been done for years in Germany by *Berufsakademie* found in federal states, where academic teaching at *Studienakademie* is blended with practical training in a real workplace to make up a dual study system.[6] In such systems, work placement is part of the formal education structures. German experiences prove that combining higher education with internships and on-the-job training is a very effective means to prevent graduate unemployment.

The report *Losy absolwentów szkół i uczelni kształcących kadry dla branży turystycznej* (*The Career Paths of Tourism School and University Graduates*) compiled for the Ministry of Sports and Tourism recommends that higher education institutions training tourism professionals should attempt at defining a practical teaching model that would at once become an ongoing process of adjustment to the changing expectations of the labor market [Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki 2010: 323]. Before final systemic solutions are in place, however, it is advised that alumni be treated by higher educations institutions as sources of up-to-date information on the job market and be involved in monitoring study programs based on employer expectations [Krajewska-Smardz 2014: 266-272]. Even though it seems that alumni could play a much greater role in the development of higher education institutions than by merely sharing their understanding of the changes occurring in the labor market.

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[6] Eurydice (Network on education systems and policies in Europe), www.eurydice.org.pl/sites/eurydice.org.pl/files/niemcy.pdf [accessed 7.02.2013].

Table 3. Benefits derived from alumni relationships by higher education institutions
specialized in tourism programs

Type (Area) of benefit	Examples of benefits
Informational	– acquisition of tourism labor market information – assistance rendered by tourism graduates by offering student internships and work placements in their organizations – sharing experiences to help more closely adapt educational programs to the requirements of the tourism labor market – ensuring exposure of faculty to business practice, enabling primary research, and holding student workshops led by practitioners
Marketing	– building a favorable image of the institution in the local community where the competences of its alumni will showcase, and attest to, the quality of its educational services – alumni as ambassadors of their alma mater – alumni's success stories attract good candidates and thus boost enrolment
Economic	– sponsorship – referrals and recommendations of higher education courses given to employees and associates – expansion of the range of postgraduate courses and training courses

Source: own.

Topical literature enumerates a variety of benefits that a higher education institution can derive from alumni relationship management. Arguably, the following are mentioned the most often:[7]

1. influence on university image and reputation,

2. competences and success stories of graduates as evidence of the superior quality of a university's educational services,

3. information on alumni career paths,

4. activities of alumni associations as supporting organizations for their higher education institutions,

5. forming partnership links, the so called partner networks (converting alumni into university sponsors, cherishing and nurturing intergenerational ties,

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[7] The benefits that a higher education institution can garner from maintaining relationships with its alumni are mentioned in: Nowaczyk, Sobolewski (eds.) 2011: (the topic is addressed by e.g.: L. Lauer – p. 20-21, M. Pluta-Olearnik – p. 32, A. Oczachowska, D. Oczachowski – p. 171); Nowaczyk, Lisiecki (eds.) 2006: (cf. e.g.: B. Iwankiewicz-Rak, S. Wrona – p. 181, 188, J. Radkowska, J. Stefaniak – p. 201, K. Pawłowski – p. 279, 282, H. Mruk – pp. 391-397); Nowaczyk, Kolasiński (eds.) 2004: (cf. e.g.: B. Iwankiewicz-Rak – p. 58-59, J. Jerschina – p. 74, P. Ratajczyk, B. Sojkin – p. 164, K. Szczepańska-Woszczyna – pp. 182-189, M. Szabłowski – p. 203, A. Ostaszewska – p. 212); Pluta-Olearnik (ed.) 2009: 15, 25; Drapińska 2011: 279-280; Hall 2011: 51-60; Mazurek-Łopacińska, Sobocińska 2011: 11; Marszałek 2010: 188.

admitting students for work placements in businesses where alumni are employed).

Higher education experts partaking in the empirical study pointed to the following three key objectives to be achieved by building alumni relations [Krajewska-Smardz, Ph.D thesis]:

1. exploiting alumni's professional expertise in the design and development of practically-profiled curricula,

2. building up the image of an organization that supports its alumni's continued professional development,

3. strengthening university brand and reputation.

The author's empirical research demonstrates, too, that measurable benefits derived from alumni relationships by higher education institutions fall within three areas: informational (acquisition of labor market information), marketing (a distinctive feature to differentiate an instittuion from its competitors), and economic (expected enrolment, sponsorship).

An overview of the benefits that higher education institutions specialized in tourism programs garner from alumni relationships are presented in Table 3.

It should be emphasized that the alumni declared the following possible areas of cooperation with their universities: providing student internships and work placements; sharing professional expertise through guest workshops; promoting graduates in the workplace; getting engaged in the organization of large events (e.g. congresses); endowing scholarships for best performing students; sponsoring scientific events, e.g. conferences.

Alumni loyalty may result in recommendations and referrals given to degree-seeking friends and relatives or in willingness to extend financial support to the university. Nearly 28% of the alumni respondents believe that financial support offered by graduates e.g. through donations to a university foundation is important. At the same time, however, almost 37% of the respondents stated no opinion, which seems to indicate that universities do not make determined, institutionalized efforts to galvanize alumni into donating funds to support the growth of their alma mater. The average amount that the alumni would donate annually appears fairly small, falling short of PLN 100,00.

Conclusions

In order to build a strong position in the higher education services market, institutions providing tourism programs should revamp their strategies toward forming multi-tier relationships with their alumni as an important group of stakeholders. This is because alumni – their position in the labor market and the extent to which

they identify themselves with their universities – play an increasingly significant role amongst factors influencing the brand and reputation of a Polish university.

The possibility to apply the knowledge and professional expertise of alumni to the design and delivery of study programs aligned with job market requirements seems to be an opportunity that is not yet being fully exploited by higher education institutions running practically-profiled curricula.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion unfolded in the paper:

1. Today, Poland's higher education market compels university management to take an innovative approach toward leadership of their institutions, to try and understand the changing needs of stakeholders and to more effectively utilize the unique potential of which alumni are part.

2. A higher education institution's interactions with its alumni are becoming increasingly important, and effective alumni relationship management can not only strengthen university brand and reputation, portraying it as an organization that supports alumni career development, but it can also be instrumental in the design and delivery of practically-profiled study programs and become a valuable source of labor market information.

3. The rationale for nurturing a relationship is that it can create value that both the parties will be able to benefit from. Building a relationship incurs financial costs and expenditure of time, while measurable returns from alumni relationship management are slow to arrive and cannot be expected but in the long run. Based on feedback from alumni, statements by university officials and the opinions of higher education experts, further changes are to be anticipated in the ways that higher education institutions interact with their alumni as they evolve toward the application of professional techniques to building, maintaining and expanding alumni relationships as well as to monitoring their outcomes.

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Zarządzanie relacjami uczelni o profilu turystycznym z absolwentami w kontekście prowadzenia praktycznego profilu kształcenia

Streszczenie. Współczesny rynek edukacji na poziomie wyższym w Polsce wymaga od kadry kierującej uczelnią innowacyjnego podejścia do zarządzania podmiotem, jakim jest szkoła wyższa. Aby sprostać licznym wyzwaniom, ważna staje się doskonała znajomość interesariuszy uczelni oraz umiejętność zarządzania relacjami z nimi. W artykule przedstawiono zarządzanie relacjami

z interesariuszami uczelni w układzie podmiotowym i narzędziowym, a następnie na tym tle odniesiono się do absolwentów, których znaczenie dla uczelni rośnie, zwłaszcza w aspekcie przyjętego przez nie praktycznego profilu kształcenia. Celem artykułu jest zidentyfikowanie relacji uczelni z interesariuszami oraz opracowanie układu podmiotowego i narzędziowego zarządzania tymi relacjami, a także dokonanie oceny dotychczasowych metod kształtowania relacji szkoły wyższej z absolwentami i wskazanie kierunku, w jakim powinny nastąpić zmiany w ich wykorzystaniu. W artykule wykorzystano metodę analizy i metodę syntezy oraz metodę badań bezpośrednich.

Słowa kluczowe: *absolwenci, interesariusze uczelni, zarządzanie relacjami*