

# Opportunities for Social Engagement of Business Student Leaders

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## Abstract

Membership in affiliate professional organizations is a form of social engagement that has proven beneficial to students. It has an important role in their leadership and career preparation. This study was conducted to identify the opportunities for social engagement of business student leaders, specifically the accountancy students who run as officers for the Junior Philippine Institute for Accountants (JPIA). The main instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire that was administered to 62 officers of JPIA from Region IV-A. The study found out that there were a lot of opportunities for social engagement that were made available to the JPIA officers, such as leadership seminars, regional and national seminars, conferences and conventions related to accounting, firm visits, planning sessions with accounting professionals, general assemblies, academic and non-academic competitions, and outreach activities. They were also introduced to the environment and activities of the accounting profession. The officers likewise developed the values of fellowship and solidarity with the other chapters, social awareness through the different outreach activities, as well as the moral values central to the accounting profession. It is recommended that, since membership in student or junior affiliates of a professional organization has proven beneficial to the student-members, there should be concerted efforts on the part of the faculty and school administrators to encourage their students to join these organizations.

**Keywords:** student leaders, social engagement, professional organizations, student organizations

## Introduction

College education is considered as a preparation for one's future career. It is where the students are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that they will use when they practice their profession. These knowledge, skills and attitudes should not only be developed in the four corners of the classroom but rather, they should be acquired even outside the school premises. One way to ensure this is to allow the students to engage in organizations related to their future job. This can be referred to as social engagement. Social engagement, according to Millican (in <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/stibbe-handbook-of-sustainability/additional-chapters/social-engagement>) is the ability to work constructively within and between social groups to create more resilient and sustainable communities. It can also mean one's participation in the activities of a social group (Prohaska, Anderson and Binstock, 2012). Membership in affiliate professional organizations is a form of social engagement that has proven beneficial to the students. Erstad (2015) said that joining a student chapter of a professional association is one powerful way to position the students' future for success in their respective career fields; it also allows them to take advantage of leadership opportunities that can help them sharpen the skills they'll need to advance their careers. It can help the students to build their skills, attend special events to network with professionals in their field, and access hundreds of valuable resources to jumpstart their careers (in <https://www.asme.org/about-asme/professional-membership/benefits-for-students>). Being part of a professional organization can be financially beneficial for students through scholarships, loan opportunities, supplemental training, news updates or free access to field-related resources ([http://study.com/articles/The\\_Benefits\\_of\\_Student\\_Membership\\_to\\_Professional\\_Associations.html](http://study.com/articles/The_Benefits_of_Student_Membership_to_Professional_Associations.html)). It will enhance their understanding of the profession and the issues they will face, and encourage connections between the association and the students (in <http://ischool.sjsu.edu/current-students/resources/complimentary-student-memberships-professional-associations>). Balthazard enumerated three reasons why students should join their professional associations: (1) It could very well get the students their first job. (2) They could learn all sorts of stuff about careers that could be of use to them in making career decisions. (3) They can get some real help in achieving professional designations (in <https://yconic.com/article/why-students-should-join-their-professional-associations>). Similarly, Mata, Latham and Ransome, (2010) mentioned that joining professional organizations and attending professional conferences can provide tremendous career development, skill-building, and professional networking opportunities.

Business students, in particular, have a lot of options in joining professional organizations. In the Philippines, the following professional organizations have student or junior affiliates: Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA) for accountants with Junior Philippine Institute for Accountants (JPIA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) for management accountants with Junior Philippine Association of

Management Accountants (JPAMA), Financial Executives of the Philippines (FINEX) for financial executives with Junior Financial Executives of the Philippines (JFINEX), and Philippine Marketing Association (PMA) for marketing professionals with Junior Marketing Association (JMA). These junior affiliates have an important role in the leadership and career preparation of the business students.

JPIA, in particular, serves as a medium of expression and aspiration for the accountancy students. It also promotes and protects their welfare and interests in particular and the accountancy profession in general. It aims to uphold fellowship and solidarity, academic excellence, socio-civic and cultural consciousness, moral integrity, critical, analytical and constructive thinking, and organizational thinking. Membership to this organization can prove beneficial to the budding accountants since accountancy is considered as one of the most challenging professions in the Philippines, given the usual low percentage passing in the Certified Public Accountants (CPA) board examinations.

Since the researcher is an accountancy student and the president of JPIA of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas (DLSUD) and the Cavite chapter, she made this paper to determine the opportunities for social engagement of business student leaders, specifically the accountancy students who run as officers of JPIA.

The following questions were answered in this study:

- 1) What are the students' reasons in choosing to be an officer of JPIA?
- 2) Who influenced or invited them to be an officer of JPIA?
- 3) What activities have they participated in as officers of JPIA?
- 4) What activities have they initiated and managed as officers of JPIA?
- 5) What benefits did they get from these activities?
- 6) What recommendations can they give to JPIA to improve this student organization?

This study was based on the concept forwarded by Willms (2000) that engagement is the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic school activities. Students join the junior affiliates of professional organizations and some become officers because doing so can provide them with opportunities for leadership and skill building that they will be able to use in their future careers. In that way, their learning will be more productive and functional.

Another basis of the paper was the experiential learning theory used by Munoz, Miller and Poole (2016). They asserted that this theory has been referenced as a possible method for attracting and retaining members in student organizations. In fact, they found out that students value activities that involve professional development and contact with

professionals. These activities are made possible if the students belong to the junior affiliates of professional organizations.

## Methodology

This study was a descriptive research that tried to identify the opportunities for social engagement of business student leaders, specifically the accountancy students who run as officers of JPIA. The main instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire that was administered to the JPIA officers to determine their reasons for joining this organization, the activities that they initiated and participated in, and the benefits they derived from these activities.

The respondents were 62 officers of the JPIA from Region IV-A representing the following schools: De La Salle University–Dasmariñas (26), San Sebastian College Recoletos de Cavite (6), Cavite State University (6), Saint Dominic College of Asia (4), De La Salle Lipa (3), University of Perpetual Help System Dalta–Molino (3), Lyceum of the Philippines University–Cavite (2), Rogationist College (1), National College of Science and Technology (1), Polytechnic University of the Philippines–Alfonso (1), Malayan Colleges (1), Divine Word College of San Jose (1), Colegio de San Juan de Letran (1), and Tanauan Institute (1). There were 5 respondents who did not specify their school affiliation.

Out of the 62 respondents, six were second year students, 19 were third year, 27 were fourth year, and nine were fifth year. There was one respondent who did not specify his/her year level.

From these respondents, 11 were presidents, 20 were vice presidents, three were assistant vice presidents, two were secretary generals, one was an assistant secretary general, one was a consul general, one was a coordinator for outreach activities, 15 were members of the Board of Directors, and three were members of the Standing Committees. Five did not indicate their positions.

In terms of the length of their service to the association, 33 served for 1-2 years, 24 served for 2-3 years, and 4 served for 4-5 years. One did not indicate his/her length of service. The data were statistically treated using frequency count and percentage.

## Results and Discussion

**Problem 1** What are the students' reasons in choosing to be an officer of JPIA?

**Table 1** Students' Reasons in Choosing to be an Officer of JPIA

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1. To develop my leadership and communication skills	55	88.71
2. To serve my fellow JPIAns	49	79.03
3. To get acquainted with people in the industry	25	40.32
4. To increase my chances of internship in established accounting firms	24	38.71

Table 1 shows that the main reason why students ran as officers of JPIA was to develop their leadership and communication skills, as attested by 55 or 88.71% of the respondents. This is similar with the findings of Phillips, McLaughlin, Gettig, Fajiculay and Adevincula, (2015) that the students' interest in developing leadership skills had a large impact on 57% of the students that were surveyed. Leadership and communication were also included in the list of skills that involvement in organizations affected.

The other reasons were: to serve the other members of JPIA by 49 respondents or 79.03%, to get acquainted with people in the industry by 25 respondents or 40.32%, and to increase chances of internship by 24 respondents or 38.71%.

**Problem 2** Who influenced or invited them to be an officer of JPIA?**Table 2** People Who Influenced or Invited the Students to Become Officers

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1. Department chair and/or college dean	8	12.90
2. JPIA adviser	6	9.68
3. JPIA officers	41	66.13
4. JPIA members	24	38.71
Others: oneself, family, friends, classmates		

It can be noted from Table 2 that the majority of the respondents were influenced or invited by the current officers of the association, as answered by 41 respondents or 66.13%. Also a big number, 24 or 38.71%, were influenced or invited by the members of the association themselves. This shows that both the current officers and members of JPIA were scouting for people with leadership potential, hence the invitation given to certain people to run for office.

It is unfortunate that in spite of the tremendous career development, skill-building, and professional networking opportunities that are made available by joining professional organizations as mentioned by Mata, Latham and Ransome, (2010). there were only a few department chairs/deans (8 or 12.90%) and faculty advisers (6 or 9.68%) who influenced these students to become JPIA officers.

**Problem 3** What activities have they participated in as officers of JPIA?

**Table 3** Activities Participated in by the Officers

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1. Leadership seminars	46	74.19
2. Regional and national seminars, conferences and conventions related to accounting	34	54.84
3. Firm visits	9	14.52
4. Planning sessions with accounting professionals	7	11.29
Others: Group meetings, sports fest, assembly, CMA seminar		

Table 3 indicates the activities participated in by the JPIA officers. On top of the list is their attendance to leadership seminars, with 46 respondents or 74.19%. This is an indication that their main reason for running as officers of JPIA, to develop their leadership and communication skills, was achieved through the provision of opportunities to attend seminars that will develop their leadership skills, as emphasized Phillips et al. (2015). This is one of the opportunities for social engagement made possible to these officers.

Second in the list is their attendance to regional and national seminars, conferences and conventions related to accounting, as attested by 34 respondents or 54.84%. This was another opportunity for social engagement for these officers. There is a big possibility for networking and building connections because usually, the invited guest speakers are professionals in the field.

The other activities participated in by the officers can also be considered as social engagement opportunities: firm visits where they get to see the environment where they will eventually work in the future and planning sessions with accounting professionals where they have the opportunity to share ideas with the professionals in their chosen career. Some members also mentioned attending group meetings, sports fests, assemblies, and CMA seminars. All these made the officers engage in discussion, whether formally or informally, with the professionals in their field.

**Problem 4** What activities have they initiated and managed as officers of JPIA?

**Table 4** Activities Initiated and Managed by the Officers

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1. General assemblies, seminars and conferences	45	72.58
2. Quiz bees and/or academic competitions	25	40.32
3. Sports fest and/or non-academic competitions	30	48.39
4. Outreach activities	17	27.42

From Table 4, it can be seen that the officers were able to initiate and manage the following activities: general assemblies, seminars and conference by 45 or 72.58% of the respondents, quiz bees and/or academic competitions by 25 or 40.32%, sports fest and/or non-academic competitions by 30 or 48.39%, and outreach activities by 17 or 27.42%.

These activities initiated and managed by the JPIA officers may be considered as opportunities for the well-rounded development of the members of the association, which also served as venues for social engagements. They were in accordance with the objectives of their association: developing fellowship and solidarity through sports fest and other non-academic competitions; developing academic excellence and critical, analytical and constructive thinking through quiz bees and other academic competitions; developing organizational thinking through general assemblies, seminars and conference; and developing socio-civic and cultural consciousness through outreach activities.



**Problem 5** What benefits did they get from these activities?

**Table 5** Benefits Derived from JPIA Activities

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1. Fellowship and solidarity with other JPIA chapters	45	72.58
2. Social awareness through the different outreach activities	31	50.00
3. Introduction to the environment and activities of the accounting profession	39	62.90
4. Inculcation of moral values central to the accounting profession	36	58.06
Others: self-confidence, recognition of achievements inside and outside the school		

Table 5 shows the benefits derived by the officers from the JPIA activities. The highest number of the respondents, 45 or 72.58%, said that they cultivated fellowship and solidarity with other JPIA chapters. It means that their range of contacts increased through their association with the other provincial, regional and national chapters. This was a good opportunity for networking. There were 31 respondents or 50% who said that they developed social awareness through the different outreach activities. This is a good indication that the future accountants can readily participate in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of their prospective companies. This is an indication that volunteerism was present in these students. There were 39 respondents or 62.90% who said that these activities introduced them to the environment and activities of the accounting profession. This is important for enhancing their understanding of the profession and the issues it faces (in <http://school.sjsu.edu/current-students/resources/complimentary-student-memberships-professional-associations>). There were 36 respondents or 58.06% who said that they were able to inculcate moral values central to the accounting profession. Since the accounting profession is a delicate one dealing with money which normally tempts people, it is important that moral values be developed by the future accountants so that they will be trustworthy when they already start working.

The other benefits given by the respondents were the development of self-confidence and the recognition of achievements inside and outside the school. Slack and Murphy (1995) concluded in their study that students' participation in professional organizations was strongly associated with their confidence in their abilities to function as a member. This confidence

will allow them to do a lot of other activities and to meet more people since they are secured in who they are as persons.

**Problem 6** What recommendations can they give to JPIA to improve this student organization?

**Table 6** Recommendations to JPIA

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1. Organize more events that will allow local chapters to share best practices and learn from one another	46	74.19
2. Conduct more seminars, conferences and conventions pertaining to the updates and changes in the accounting profession	41	66.13
3. Develop programs that will help members and non-members improve their academic performance	43	69.35
4. Initiate more exposure activities in accounting firms and other places of work of accounting professionals	46	74.19
Others: balance academic and non-academic activities		

It can be noted from Table 6 that there were certain recommendations that the officers wanted to give to JPIA to further improve their organization. First in the list is organizing more events that will allow local chapters to share best practices and learn from one another, as attested by 46 respondents or 74.19%. This will mean providing a venue for networking and learning from one another for the improvement of the management of the other local organizations. Improving the management of the organization will equate to better services for its members. There were 41 respondents or 66.13% who recommended the conduct of more seminars, conferences and conventions pertaining to the updates and changes in the accounting profession. These activities will be important to the potential accountants to be ready for the challenges of their future job. These will provide them with opportunities to enhance their classroom learning through real-life talks about what is happening in the field of accountancy. There is also a need to develop programs that will help members and non-members improve their academic performance, as recommended by 43 respondents or 69.35%. It has to be noted that accountancy is one program with a very strict retention policy so any form of help for the improvement of the students' academic

performance is always welcome. It also reflects the officers' belief in the importance of good academic standing, regardless of whether students are members of the organization or not. There were 46 respondents or 74.19% who suggested having more exposure activities in accounting firms and other places of work of accounting professionals. Aside from the opportunities for networking with professionals, exposure activities to places of work will orient the students to the true nature of their future profession. It will prepare these students to the demands of the profession as they see the professional accountants at work. Another recommendation given was the balance between academic and non-academic activities. The local chapters may look into the plan of activities they have and check if there is a balance between these activities. This will help in the holistic development of the accountancy students.

## **Conclusions**

This study was conducted to identify the opportunities for social engagement of business student leaders, specifically the accountancy students who ran as officers of JPIA. The main instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire that was administered to 62 officers of JPIA from Region IV-A.

The study found out that there were a lot of opportunities for social engagement that were made available to the JPIA officers like leadership seminars, regional and national seminars, conferences and conventions related to accounting, firm visits, planning sessions with accounting professionals, general assemblies, academic and non-academic competitions, and outreach activities. These activities provided them with venues to network with other officers and develop contacts with the accounting professionals. They were also introduced to the environment and activities of the accounting profession. All these will be useful in their future job hunting.

The officers likewise developed the values of fellowship and solidarity with the other chapters, social awareness through the different outreach activities, as well as the moral values central to the accounting profession.

## **Recommendations**

From this study, it is suggested that the recommendations given by the officers be disseminated to the different chapters for their implementation. These will help in improving their organization so that they can provide varied but balanced activities for the holistic development of their members.

It is also recommended that since membership in student or junior affiliates of a professional organization has proven beneficial to the student-members, there should be concerted efforts on the part of the faculty and school administrators to encourage their students to join these organizations.

Further, a similar study may be undertaken at the national level using a standardized instrument and inferential statistics to truly determine the importance of the students' social engagement through JPIA. The other student affiliates may conduct a similar study for their own organizations.

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