

The Employability of Accounting Technology Graduates of the University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City, Philippines

Mary Jane B. Amogues¹ and Emma V. Sagarino²

¹ Faculty, College of Accountancy and Business Education
University of the Immaculate Conception
mamoguis@uic.edu.ph

² Research Director, University of the Immaculate Conception

ABSTRACT

Academic institutions must track their graduates to establish their employment status and identify areas for improvement. As a result, this study among accounting technology graduates from the University of the Immaculate Conception was done to determine their profile, labor market information, job-related competencies, level of satisfaction at UIC, and insights into the elements that contribute to their employability. This is a descriptive study that made use of a survey and a focus group discussion (FGD). The research was carried out in Davao City and focused on the city's various industries. It covered 95 graduates from the academic years (AY) 2013-2014 to 2018-2019, 89 in the survey, and six in the FGD. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and the mean. In addition, some qualitative data was embedded into the discussion to help triangulate the quantitative findings, and the insights into their employability were thematized. Most survey respondents are females who are single and graduated in the AY 2017–2018. Almost half of the survey participants are already regular employees, and more than a third are managers or supervisors. Communication skills are the most important and beneficial in their first employment followed by human relations, entrepreneurial abilities, critical thinking, and IT skills. Some qualitative participants believe that entrepreneurial skills, along with adaptability, flexibility, and dependability, were valuable in their first job. The participants are highly employable considering that the majority obtained their first job within one to six months, while more than 40% were hired within a month of applying. The top five industries where they are

employed include retail, government agencies/LGUs, banking, BPO, and agribusiness. The employment they got is aligned with their college preparation. The participants found the UIC administration, ABA program, faculty, school facilities, and student services very satisfactory. The qualitative participants appreciate the responsiveness of the administration to the concerns of the students vis-à-vis its mission of providing quality education. Professional competence and good grades, on-the-job training, UIC graduates' satisfactory job performance, and Christian values are among the elements they believe have greatly helped their job search. Some participants value the Catholic education they received at the university.

Keywords: Tracer study, employability, university accounting technology graduates, descriptive research, Davao City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Tracer Studies are commonly becoming a recognizable practice worldwide. They involve identifying and following graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide spurred by the need to consider how graduates view the experiences they underwent during their degree study and their transition to the job market (Badiru et al., 2016). The importance of graduate tracer studies is to incorporate improvements into the institutional effectiveness programs of universities or higher education institutions by collecting and analyzing information on graduate's professional and personal careers. Such studies can be used to collect data on the employment situation of the most recent graduates to obtain indicators for their professional performance (Teichler, 1998; Egesah et al., 2014). They can therefore be used to contribute to causal explanations of the relevance of the study conditions and services provided by the higher education institutions and the graduate's performance in the labor market (Teichler 2011, Schomburg et al., 2011, Heidemann 2010, Egesah et al., 2014).

Some of the indicators of course effectiveness is the ability of the graduates to prove to employers their competency and consequently be hired as employees (Sagarino et al, 2013). Likewise,

graduate tracer studies are relentlessly becoming an exhilarating instrument by which intrinsic opportunities, curriculum and training relevancies, and challenges are revealed and used (Ramos, 2006; Egesah et al., 2014).

One of the challenging issues that an academic institution must address is to prove that its graduates are employable. Hence, the mapping of graduates is another essential aspect of tracer research. Hinchliffe et al; (2011) and Holmes (2013) defined graduate employability as the ability of higher education graduates to find and create work. Employability implies that institutions and companies have supported students' knowledge, skills, qualities, reflective disposition, and identity, necessary for graduates to succeed in the workplace.

Accountancy and Business Administration Program of the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC) has produced two tracer studies of its graduates. (Sagarino et al, 2013) uncovered that the employability of the business graduates is specifically attributable to effective curriculum and training, prestige of the university, values, and discipline. Employers find the UIC business graduates to be competent, dependable, trustworthy, God-centered, dedicated, and sociable. These business graduates were mostly employed within six months of graduation. Caminade et al. (2016), on the other hand, ascertained that among the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy graduates, the majority are employed within their field of expertise. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents are Certified Public Accountants of whom 79% were employed within a month after submitting their application. Skills in entrepreneurial, relational, communication, information technology, and problem-solving were the identified competencies relevant to their job.

On the other hand, the Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology (BSAT) of the university was established in the academic year 2010-2011 and the first batch graduated in the academic year 2013-2014. The program produced 364 BSAT graduates since the course started and the researchers would like to track their employment status and careers. These graduates have not been mapped in terms of their employability and work performance. This study will provide feedback about the effectiveness and curriculum relevance of the accounting technology course as basis for the university education and services program improvement and

marketability. In the academic year 2018-2019, UIC replaced the course BSAT with BSIS in accordance with CHED Memorandum Order No. 25 series of 2015, which contained the policies, standards, and guidelines (PSG) for Bachelor of Science and Information System (BSIS).

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to map the Accounting Technology graduates of the university employed in the different industries in Davao City. Specifically, it determined the following:

1. The profile of the participants as to sex, civil status, school year graduated, and further studies pursued.
2. The labor market information of the participants, particularly, the employment status, job position, skills useful in the job or business venture, means of obtaining the job and period of seeking the first job after college
3. The reasons of staying in the first job
4. Industry they are employed?
5. The satisfaction level of the graduate – respondents in terms of administration, ABA program, faculty, school facilities and student services and their insights about the factors that contributed to their employability

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers utilized a descriptive research design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches such as survey and focused group discussion (FGD). Participants' profiles, labor market information, and the industries in which they work were all described. The participants' perceptions of the factors that influence their employability were also discussed.

The study was conducted in Davao City which is a commercial center and highly urbanized city on the island of Mindanao. Davao City has achieved a milestone double-digit economic growth of 10.9 percent in 2017, the highest in the history

of the region. The industry grew by 19.1 percent, owing to the improving performance of the construction, which accelerated to 38.2 percent in 2017 from 24 percent in 2016; manufacturing, 11.4 percent from 11.3 percent in 2016; mining and quarrying, 18.2 percent from 15.7 percent in 2016. Services grew by 7.3 percent and business activities sustained its 6.8 percent growth in 2017 (Colina IV, 2018). The employment rate in the Davao region in 2018, where Davao City belonged, is relatively higher at 95.7% compared to the other areas in the Philippines like National Capital, Ilocos, Central Luzon, CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Bicol, Western and Visayan regions.

The participants of the study are composed of the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC) Accounting Technology graduates of AY 2013-2014 to 2018-2019 from selected establishments representing various industries in Davao City. Quota sampling was employed where a minimum of 25% of the graduates or at least 91 participants was targeted. Moreover, snowball sampling was used in identifying the probable respondents for the survey. Hence, the study covered 95 graduates, 89 in survey and six in the FGD.

The respondents were asked to answer an adapted questionnaire from the tracer study of Caminade et al. (2016), which focuses on the contribution of UIC to their employment and career. Moreover, a focused group discussion (FGD) was also conducted on another set of participants through a virtual platform to draw out in-depth information related to their employability. One of the researchers facilitated the FGD. Prior to the actual conversations, she oriented the focused group first about the purpose of the discussions and made sure of the voluntariness of their participation. The proceedings were recorded, and the FGD lasted for two hours.

The data were analyzed through frequency counts and percentages to present the profile, employment information and employability factors of the graduate respondents. Mean was used to determine the satisfaction level of the respondents on the different services provided by the institution. The satisfaction level was interpreted through this matrix.

Range of Scale	Description	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	Very high	Excellent
2.51-3.25	High	Very Satisfactory
1.76-2.50	Average	Satisfactory
1.00-1.75	Low	Poor

On the other hand, the FGD recorded proceedings were transcribed and the researchers utilized some of the responses to substantiate the discussion of the quantitative results. As to the insights of participants about the factors influencing their employability, a thematic analysis was made.

Ethical Considerations

The enumerators ensured that the respondents were properly approached to participate in the survey. Each of the participants understood the purpose of the study before they gave their consent to fill out the survey form. Hence, their participation was voluntary in nature. No data was associated to each of the respondents in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Prior to the data gathering the respondents were oriented about the objectives of the study and informed consent was obtained. It was emphasized to them that they are the most appropriate respondent for the study and their honesty in accomplishing the survey tool is very important to establish the credibility of the findings of the study.

The researchers will provide the dean of the College of Accountancy and Business Education with a copy of the findings of this study for possible implementation of the recommendations. Moreover, the researchers plan to publish their findings to a referred research journal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Survey Participants

The survey covered 89 BSAT graduates, majority of them are females (73%) and the rest are males. Predominantly 98.9% were single. Most respondents (52.8%) graduated in the academic year 2017–2018; 22.5% in 2016–2017; 12.4% in 2014–2015; 11.2 % in 2015–2016; and 1.1% in 2013–2014. Furthermore, 5.6 % of these graduates pursued a master's degree in business administration, 1.1 % proceeded to a master's degree in management.

The qualitative participants are also dominated by females (83.3%), and they are still not married. Half of them graduated in AY 2016-2017, while more than a third in AY 2017-2018. Only one went on to pursue further studies, particularly in law.

Labor Market Information

Employment Status & Job Position. As to the respondents' labor market information (Table 1), 49.5% are already regular employees, while 30% are contractual or casual employees, 5.6 % are self-employed, and 14.6% are unemployed. Of those who are employed, 5% are managers, 27.6% are supervisors, and 67.1 % are rank and file employees.

Skills Useful in the First Job. For the quantitative participants, communication is the most important and useful skill for graduate respondents in their first job, followed by Human Relations, Entrepreneurial Skills, Critical Thinking, and IT Skills. Some of the qualitative participants triangulate the entrepreneurial skills as beneficial in their first job. Specifically, a participant shared her experience when she was employed with a Samsung sales outlet. The marketing and sales skills that she initially learned from UIC helped her as an effective employee.

[...] *katong* marketing ug sales skills, *isa jud to siya kay* since *nag* work *ko sa* Samsung before sa PNB, *na mag hit man gud ka ug* quota when it comes to sales. [...] (#FGD_06)

I find marketing and sales skills to be essential because when I was still working with Samsung before I transferred to PNB, I needed to hit the sales quota.

Table 1. Labor Market Information

Aspects	Frequency/ Cumulative Rate	Percentage/ Rank
2.1 Employment Status		
Regular	44	49.5
Contractual/Casual	27	30.3
Self-employed	5	5.6
Unemployed	13	14.6
Total	89	100.0
2.2 Job Position		
Manager	4	5.3
Supervisor	21	27.6
Rank and File	51	67.1
Total	76	100.0
2.3 Skills Useful in the First Job		
Communication	142	Rank 1
Human Relations	139	Rank 2
Entrepreneurial	138	Rank 3
Critical Thinking	136	Rank 4
IT Skills	133	Rank 5
2.4 Means of Obtaining the First Job		
Response to an advertisement	7	9.9
As walk-in applicant	14	19.7
Recommended by someone	29	40.8
Information from friends	10	14.1
Arranged by school's	5	7.0

job placement officer		
Online Recruitment	6	8.5
Total	71	100.0
<hr/>		
2.5 Period of Seeking the First Job		
Less than a month	29	40.9
1 to 6 months	38	53.5
7 months to 11 months	3	4.2
2 years to less than 3 years	1	1.4
Total	71	100.0

Also, most of the qualitative participants validated the relational skills to be essential in their jobs. One participant emphasized that her co-employees appreciate her qualities of a modern auditor--sociable, sympathetic, and joyful. She believes that it is beneficial to the company when the auditor helps find solutions to strengthen the organization's internal control system instead of finding faults among the employees.

[...] *Di ba kung internal auditor ka ang mindset kay strikta ka, dili ka approachable kanang murag isog kaayo ka sa mga panan-aw sa mga co-employee mo. Pero in terms man gud sa akoo, murag nakita nila na approachable ko, cheerful ko, dali lang ko maduolan. Kanang instead na problem ang amoang storyahan, gapangita mi ug solution kung paano i-solve tong problem. (#FGD_03)*

If you are an internal auditor, you are perceived to be strict and unapproachable by your peers. It is contrary to my personality; they find me approachable and cheerful. Instead

of talking about the problem, we discover a solution to solve the problem.

Moreover, they give credence on the qualities such as adaptability, flexibility, and dependability. For them, these are the characteristics that are common to UICians.

[...] *Dali ra daw ko naka adapt sa environment, tapos maasaban daw kay ako ang go-to-person sa akong mga peers*
[...] (FGD_01)

They noticed that I quickly adjusted to the new atmosphere and that I am dependable because I am a go-to person by my peers.

[...] *Ako daw kay very considerate. Gina weigh nako kung significant ba ni siya or kailangan pa ba ni i-report and then last thing I think ang na-hone sa akooa sa UIC kay flexible sa tanang aspect. Pwede ko i-assign diri like sa akong work karon pwede pud sa laing lugar.* (#FGD_02)

They find me considerate since I weigh the findings to see if they're significant and whether I should report them. Then, I believe UIC has assisted me in honing my flexibility. I could be stationed anywhere.

This finding on the participants' notable qualities implies that UIC is successful in producing Ignacian Marian graduates with the desired characteristics. As published on the university website, RVM graduates are expected to be competent in coping with change, which is adaptation. To be helpful to the organization they work, they must be adaptable and inventive.

The quantitative result supports the finding of Cervantes et al. (2019) that communication, human relations, and critical thinking skills are essential in the workplace practice of the College of Business Entrepreneurship and Accountancy graduates of their university. Further, IT skill was rated important. Similarly, the findings support Alvarez's (2020) conclusion that critical thinking skills, human relations/interpersonal skills, entrepreneurial skills, oral and written communication skills are all fundamental skills in the workplace for the graduates, while IT skill was rated important.

Means of Obtaining & Period of Seeking the First Job

The most common method of acquiring their first employment was being referred by someone (40.8%), as a walk-in applicant (19.7%), information from friends (14.1%), a response to an advertisement (9.9%), online recruitment (8%), and arranged by school's job placement officer (7%). In terms of the time spent looking for a first job, it's worth noting that a considerable percentage (40.9%) were hired within a month of applying, while the majority (53.5%) took between one and six months.

The qualitative responses reinforce the claim of the participants that they were hired within a month of applying for their first job. Indeed, one participant happily shared that she was requested to report to her first job as an accounting staff in a hotel the day after graduation. She credited the school job fair, where she applied and was interviewed, for facilitating her speedy employment.

Ang first job ko sa Penacle, madali lang ako naka trabaho doon kasi sa job Fair ng UIC and then one day after ng graduation, nag start na ako kaagad, so walang rest at vacation na nangyari after graduation. Bali ininterview kami and the sabi nila na mag wait lang daw sila ng graduation day ko pero hindi pa nila sinabi na hired na ako maam. [...] (#FGD_04)

Another participant backed up the claim of quick employability by saying she was hired three weeks after applying. She was employed on the spot immediately following her job interview.

She even admitted to being divided between two potential jobs at the same time. She was considered for both companies, where she applied in response to a job advertisement on Facebook.

Since graduate ko March 2017, 3 weeks after pa ko nag start apply jud. Nay mga groups sa facebook na naga indicate jud silag mga email asa ka mag send ug resume which is mga accounting staff ang ilahang mga kailangan. So, nag send ko sa duha na companies which is the Avida Towers and Prime Billboards. [...] Gi-interview ko ni Avida, gipatake kog exam and then that day sad kay gitawagan ko sa Prime Billboards na mag interview ko for the next day. Then that day na gi-interview ko nila is na-hired on the spot ko which is gusto nila na on that day pud ko mu-duty dayon, agad-agad ilang gusto. (#FGD_06)

The job search waiting time between one to six months jives with the findings of Gonzales (n.d). He highlighted that their business education graduates in Northwestern University were hired within six months from the time they started hunting for a job.

Reasons for Staying in the First Job

One of the vital reasons mentioned by 47 of the 76 respondents or (62%) for staying in their first job is the compensation and benefits provided to employees. In addition, 58 percent said that the challenges of their first job are the reason they are remaining. Thirty-five percent said their job is related to their course, 33 percent said their choice is based on their specific expertise, and 18 percent said the essential aspect is proximity to their home. Twenty percent stated it was because of family influence, and 13 percent said it was because of peer influence. (Table 2).

Table 2. Reasons for Staying in the First Job

Reasons for Staying the First Job	Number of Responses	Percentage
Salaries and Benefits	47	62%
Career Challenge	44	58%
Related to Course	35	46%
Related to Special Skill	25	33%
Family Influence	15	20%
Peer Influence	10	13%

This finding on retention factors supports Bussin's (2018) conclusion that millennials value benefits, seek challenges, and learning. Furthermore, they have been observed to enjoy recognition, growth, and career opportunities. Hence, it is recommended that management may utilize strategies along these aspects to encourage the millennials to stay in their job.

Industries the Graduates Are Employed

The data in Table 3 depicts the industries in which the graduates are employed. A significant number of respondents (26%) worked in the retail industry, as well as government institutions (14.5%). Some worked in banking and BPO (9.2% each), agribusiness (6.6%), health services and land development (5.3%), academe and pharmaceutical (3.9%), telecommunications, and food and beverage (2.6%), with the rest working in other industries such as cooperatives, financing, insurance, online, and logistics (1.3 percent per sector).

The FGD participants' current employment corroborates the quantitative results as they work with retail industries, a government agency like GSIS, banking and financial institutions, and BPO. Most of them serve as internal auditors, especially in the retail and financial institutions.

Currently, I work in Deco Arts
Marketing, store support of Citi

Hardware as an internal auditor.
(#FGD_05)

Currently, connected with Philippine National Bank (PNB) as new account's clerk or teller. I am in rotation every now and then so either new account's clerk or teller. I have been a regular employee for three years now. [...] (#FGD_06)

The top five industries where the respondents are currently employed concur with the result of Calma (2019), where he highlighted that the Business Administration graduates of Baliuag University are employed in industries such as banking, marketing & sales, services, and BPO. However, it should be noted that the BSAT graduates of UIC are also relevant among government agencies and local government units. Also, the result is parallel to the findings of Sagarino et al. (2013) that most UIC business graduates are employed in retail, banking, and government agencies.

Table 3. Industries the Graduates Are Employed

Industry	Frequency	Percentage
Retail	20	26.3
Government Agencies/LGU	11	14.5
Banking	7	9.2
Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)	7	9.2
Agribusiness	5	6.6
Health Services	4	5.3
Land Development	4	5.3
Academe	3	3.9
Pharmacy/Pharmaceutical	3	3.9
Food and Beverage	2	2.6
Telecommunication	2	2.6
Cooperative	1	1.3
Financing	1	1.3
Insurance	1	1.3
Online (Internet)	1	1.3

Logistics	1	1.3
1.3Mining	1	1.3
Oil	1	1.3
Physical Fitness Center	1	1.3

Satisfaction Level of the Graduates on Selected Aspects

The data in Table 4 illustrates that the respondents' overall satisfaction level with the school's selected services is high, with an overall mean score of 2.85. This result means that they find the administration, ABA program, faculty, school facilities, and student services as very satisfactory. Likewise, their responses are homogenous and consistent ($SD < 1.00$). However, school facilities got the lowest mean score of 2.65, yet it is still described as high (very satisfactory). This result infers that UIC may continue improving in these five areas since the rating given by the participants did not reach an excellent level.

Table 4. Satisfaction Level on Selected Aspects

Aspects	Mean	SD	Description
Administration	2.93	.79	High
ABA Program	2.96	.81	High
Faculty	3.00	.84	High
School Facilities	2.65	.85	High
Student Services	2.70	.81	High
Overall Mean	2.85	.72	High

The focus group shared some personal stories to reinforce their satisfaction about the university as their collegiate alma mater. One participant remembered how the administrator or program head responded to student feedback regarding teachers' performance during the regular evaluation conducted by guidance personnel. One of her professors, she claimed, had improved her teaching style in response to the learners' feedback. This, she believes, demonstrates that school's administration are serious about resolving students' issues, particularly when it comes to providing high-quality education.

[...] *Sa admin kay katong naa siyay*
evaluation, *gidungog jud nila ang*

comment *sa mga* students. [...] *Kay* the next semester, *na-teacher nako siya* again which is *nag bag-o jud ang iyahang way, dili na siya* more on *sa katong* usual *na ginabuhay niya mag lisod mi ug sabot. Kato siya maka-happy jud siya na* side as student and as a graduate *sad naa jud ang heart niya* is for students also, *dili lang siya na mueskwela lang ka para makabuman ka* but also *na maka* learn *jud ka sa mismo nga naa pa ka sa school ug ginamold ka nila na maging* better person at the same time. (#FGD_06)

In the aspect of administration, there was that time when the comments or evaluation of the students about the poor teacher's performance was addressed. In the next semester, that teacher's performance greatly improved. Also, the core of the university's education is not just to help students to graduate but to mold them to become better persons.

Also, one participant appreciated the desire of the teachers to help the students learn, as manifested by their patience and approachability. Moreover, she described the teachers to be kind and courteous. For her, this experience motivated her to strive more to learn the lessons well.

I can say as a whole *kay wala man namo na-teacher ang tanan*, but *sa ABA* program is that *ang* teachers are very good in teaching and then *dili sila* out of touch *na klase na mga professors na kanang dali jud nimo sila maduolan*. If ever you have questions or *kanang wala kay nasabtan sa klase*, you can really ask them and then *buotan sila kay kanang*

pag mag ask ka sa ilaha kay they won't make you feel na ay kabugo nimo oy, wala na nimo na-gets. (#FGD_01)

I can say that the teachers that the ABA program teachers are very good in teaching, and they are approachable. If you have questions or some things you did not understand, you can ask them, and then they won't make you feel like an idiot.

It is also worth noting that participants recognize the essence of what they learned at UIC in their current careers. One participant appreciated the usage of Systems Applications and Products (SAP) accounting software in one of her major subjects, which she found to be beneficial. However, another participant commented on her lack of knowledge of Microsoft Excel, which she believes should have been emphasized in her computer laboratory subject. For her, competence in this computer program is helpful in one's accounting and auditing tasks.

Siguro pud tanang lessons na na-encounter nako sa UIC especially ang SAP. Mao jud na ang pinakagamit pud na lesson na na-apply nako sa akong first job ug current job. (#FGD_04)

All the lessons that I learned from the university, especially the SAP, that is the most helpful knowledge in my first job and current job.

Kanang lisod pa gani kapaon ang excel, kanang ingana gani. So murag mas mag kuan sila program para mas i-prepare pa jud ang students sa work life ug sa ilahang maabutay na experience para dili sila mag lisod pag sugod. Great example kanang sa excel, kanang mga shortcuts,

kanang mga mag lupad-lupad lang ang numbers, stuff like that. (#FGD_05)

I had difficulty utilizing Microsoft excel. So, I suggest that in a computer subject, the students will be taught about computer programs like excel, particularly its shortcuts and animations, stuff like that.

Finally, the participants' pride in their alma mater, the University of the Immaculate Conception, is remarkable. Being a graduate of this university enhances their confidence, especially when it comes to job applications.

About *sa* UIC, *kanang* during employment search *murag ma-boast jud nimo* like *sa* HR *ng sa* Hiring Officer or *sa* supervisor *na "gikan kog UIC"*, "UIC graduate ko", *kanang murag imoha jud ipagmalaki ba. (#FGD_5)*

During your employment search, you may brag to the HR or recruiting officer about your UIC degree, of which you should be proud.

The results of UIC evaluation differ from those of Caminade et al. (2016), who found that components of administration, ABA program, and school facilities only received satisfactory ratings among UIC Accountancy graduates. This finding could imply that the institution, particularly the ABA program, has significantly improved these three areas, given the present study's respondents indicating very high evaluations.

Insights About their Employability

The qualitative participants enthusiastically shared the factors which they felt helped them get employed. Among these include

professional competence and good grades, on-the-job training, admirable job performance of UIC graduates and Christian Values.

Professional Competence and Good Grades. Some participants believe in their professional abilities, which are first demonstrated in the job exam outcomes. They also feel that companies consider the desirability of the applicants' grades when hiring employees. Indeed, having honors can be a competitive advantage, according to one participant. Furthermore, co-curricular activities in college are also regarded as supplementary features because they demonstrate one's aptitude in areas other than academics, such as leadership, time management, commitment, teamwork, and relational skills, among others.

Siguro ang gi-consider sa employer that time is first ang grades sa transcript kay ana siya kay akoang grades daw kay good naa daw koy kanang taas ang mark sa some of the subjects. [...] Nakita niya ang akong potential to be credit analyst kay gipatake ko nilag exam and then na determine nila na fit ko for that position so mao to, gitawagan ko nila balik and gi-offer nila ang job. (#FGD_01)

What the employer had considered was my good grades in some of the subjects in my transcript. The HR officer saw my potential to be a credit analyst based on the examination result. So, they offered that position to me.

Sa resume nako kay gibutang man gud nako nga like, dean's lister ko before, natagaan ko leadership award and aside from that gibutang pud nako didto na I do debates pero ako silang giingnan ug precaution na murag "I did debates

because I was afraid of crowds” *so kanang* I did something that I was fearful of *para gani i-overcome siya unya para* i-hone ug i-develop akong speaking skills (#FGD_05)

I placed in my resume that I was a dean’s lister, a leadership awardee, and a debater. But I emphasized that I did debates because I was afraid of crowds, which was my way of handling my limitations. It was also my way of honing my speaking skills.

On-the-Job Training (OJT). Employers also examine the applicant's work experience while evaluating them. One participant stated that her OJT's alignment with the employer's requirement was a factor in her being hired in her first job. Another participant, on the other hand, stated that her OJT in the United States makes her credentials more appealing to employers. Her experience working in a foreign corporate organization, she believes, is an advantage.

During the job interview, *sabi niya malaki daw ang* potential ko for the assigned job *tapos sabi niya* since accounts payable ang *kanilang hinahanap na* position, in line *din siya doon sa aking* internship which is *ang* *UIC din ang nagbigay ng* internship *sa* SSS, which is accounts payable department *din ako na-assign*. So *ang sabi nila* “if i-hire *namin ito si Carla,* *meron na siyang* ideas *agad kung ano yung* accounts payable *na* work. (FGD_04)

During the job interview, the interviewer said that I have the potential for the assigned job—accounts payable staff. This task was in line with my internship in SSS,

which is UIC facilitated. So for them, it is advantageous if they hire me because I already had an idea with accounts payable-related work.

I think *ang* OJT, *isa siya sa* reason *ngano pud siguro ko na-hire kay* during interview, since *naay* PNB *sa* New York, during *sa* area head *na* interview *nako kay gi-inform ko niya na naay bank na sa* New York *siya na* area. *Pwede daw ko mag apply didto* since *nag* OJT *ko sa gawas*. *So murag isa to siya sa* advantage *na* reason. *Siguro makita nila na naay* potential *someday naa koy* background *nga naa gud sa gawas*, so feeling *nako isa pud to siya sa* reason *ngano ko nila gi-hire*. (FGD_06)

I think one of the reasons I was hired was my internship abroad because, during the area head interview, the interviewer informed me that there is a Philippine National Bank (PNB) branch in New York to which I might be interested in applying. I think that was one of my competitive edges—the experience through my OJT abroad.

Admirable Job Performance of UIC Graduates.

Interestingly, some of the participants noted that the satisfactory performance of UIC graduates as workers in their respective organizations had influenced their employability. For them, their superiors have high regard for UIC graduates.

Siguro advantage *siya kay siguro daghan na pud nag dugay sa* bank from UIC,

on the school's practices like the prohibition of tattered jeans, hair color, and ear-piercing for boys. In our company, these are also not allowed; we need to be formal. I think these were the characters they saw in me—adaptability and flexibility.

[...] I think ang edge ko lang is sinabi ko na flexible, madaling maka adapt. Kasi after six months may interview ulit kung bakit ka qualified maging regular employee. [...] Patience to learn lang tapos marunong ka lang makisama. (#FGD_02)

I think my edge was flexibility—I could quickly adapt because, after six months of being employed, another interview is done to assess whether you are qualified to become a regular employee. So, I think patience to learn and knowing how to deal with others are essential.

The observation about the UIC graduates' satisfactory performance and relational skills match the findings of Sagarino et al. (2013), who found that human resource officers recognize the remarkable job performance of UIC alumni employees as demonstrated by their competence to accomplish their tasks. These personnel professionally interact with clients and get along well with their coworkers.

Conclusions

Most survey participants are females and predominantly were single. Most respondents graduated in the academic year 2017–2018. Only 6.7% of these graduates pursued a master's degree in business administration and management. The qualitative participants are also dominated by females, and they are still not married. Half of them

graduated in AY 2016-2017, while more than a third in AY 2017-2018. Only one went on to pursue further education, primarily in the field of law.

Almost half of the survey participants are already regular employees, while 30% are contractual or casual employees. A minimal portion is self-employed (5.6 %) and unemployed (14.6%). Managers make up 5% of those employed, supervisors make up 27.6%, and rank and file employees make up 67.1 percent.

In their first employment, the survey participants find communication skills as the most significant and helpful, followed by Human Relations, Entrepreneurial Skills, Critical Thinking, and IT Skills. Some qualitative participants validate entrepreneurial skills to be advantageous in their first employment. Moreover, they added adaptability, flexibility, and dependability to be valuable in their job.

Being referred by someone was the leading means for them to get their first job. A considerable percentage (40.9%) were hired within a month after applying, but the majority (53.5%) took one to six months. The survey participants' claim that they were hired within a month of applying for their first job is supported by the qualitative participants.

Retail, government agencies/LGUs, banking, BPO, and agribusiness are the top five industries where UIC BSAT alumni work. Salary and perks, career challenges, and employment relevance to their course are the top three reasons their stay with their first employer. This result infers that the employment they got is related to the university course they completed.

Generally, the participants find the UIC administration, ABA program, faculty, school facilities, and student services very satisfactory. The qualitative participants appreciate the responsiveness of the administration to the concerns of the students vis-à-vis its mission of providing quality education.

Professional competence and good grades, on-the-job training, the admirable job performance of UIC graduates, and Christian values are among the factors they believed aided them in their employability. Some appreciate the education founded on Catholic principles that they obtained from the UIC.

REFERENCES

- Álvarez, M. (2020). Employment Trend of Graduates of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Major in Marketing of the College of Business, Accountancy and Public Administration, Isabela State University.
- Badiru E.O. & Wahome M. (2016). Conducting Graduate Tracer Studies for Quality Assurance in East African Universities: A Focus on Graduate Students Voices on Quality Culture. *Journal of Education Practices-ERIC*.
- Bussin, M. (2018). Retention Strategies: The Key to Attracting and Retaining Excellent Employees. KR Publishing
- Caminade, Flores, & Sagarino (2016). Academic Training of the Accountancy Graduates of the University of the Immaculate Conception in Relation to their Employment Status: A Tracer Study. *International Journal of Education Research for Higher Learning*, ISSN 1656-0604 Volume 22
- Cervantes M. (2019). A tracer study on the employability of CBEA graduates (2010– 2015) of La Consolacion University Philippines. *International Journal of Business and Commerce*
- Hinchliffe, G.W., & Jolly, A. (2011). Graduate identity and employability. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(4). doi: 10.1080/01411926.2010.482200
- Holmes, L. (2013). Competing perspectives on graduate employability: Possession, position or process? *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(4) doi: 10.1080/03075079.2011.587140
- Sagarino E., Acosta P. and Amoguis M. (2013) The Employability Mapping of UIC Business Graduates: A Reflection of Program Effectiveness. *UIC Research Journal International Edition* Volume 19, 2013 ISSN 1656-0604.

Teichler U. (1998). The Transition from Higher Education to Employment in Europe. Higher Education in Europe, Vol. XXIII: 4.

Teichler U. (2011). Lessons to be learned from Graduates: Interpretation of the Results of Graduate Surveys. UNITRACE, INCHER-Kassel.