

# ALUMNI LOYALTY

*Drivers in Higher Education*

## What is Alumni Loyalty?

In general, student loyalty refers to the degree to which students feel attached to the educational institution in which they are enrolled, as manifested by their attitudes and/or behavioural behaviours. Alumni loyalty is also known

as alumni faithfulness or dedication. Loyalty can relate to both the period the student was formally enrolled and the time after the student finished his or her formal education at the school.



Financial support is frequently used to demonstrate behavioural alumni commitment. Other ways that graduates contribute were also suggested by Newman and Petrosko (2011). Wearing school apparel and lending their knowledge and abilities, such as by working on advisory boards, are examples of non-financial alumni activity. Even though its significance has been recognised, not much research has been done on the factors that might influence alumni loyalty.

According to the literature on relationship and service management, student involvement may be essential for achieving beneficial academic outcomes like alumni loyalty through connections made by students to their universities.

There is no passion  
to be found in  
playing small-in  
setting for a life that  
is less than you are  
capable of living.

-Nelson Mandela



The idea of student participation is broad. Promoting involvement is a global issue that has bearing on industrialised nations' educational systems. The idea has been extensively investigated and theorised. Student engagement can be viewed as a variety of constructs that measure both the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities and how students perceive various aspects of the institutional environment that facilitate and support their learning, despite the fact that different definitions have been used in student engagement research over the years. Thus, it is possible to consider student participation to be a meta-construct. According to recent studies, Schaufeli et al (2002) definition, which places an

emphasis on students' learning experiences, is used in this study. According to this definition, student involvement is a fruitful, good mental state associated to learning that is highlighted by vigour, dedication, and absorption. According to Schaufeli et al. (2006), the sub-dimensions of student participation are as follows: High levels of energy and mental fortitude while studying, the willingness to put effort into one's studies, and tenacity even in the face of challenges are characteristics of vigour. When someone is dedicated, they are deeply interested in their academic pursuits and feel a sense of challenge, significance, inspiration, and pride.





1 - Alumni of SMK St Francis Convent at KK Wetlands, Sabah.  
2 - Beautiful view of the mangrove trees in KK Wetlands.



## Alumni Loyalty: *Example in other countries*

As a result of decreased governmental financial support, several countries, such as the United States (US), consider alumni donation to be critical to the finance of public higher education institutions. As a result, the significance

of alumni has long been recognised. Much of the prior research on alumni loyalty was focused on studies conducted in the United States, with a focus on monetary contributions such as donations and purchasing university products. While alumni in the United States are frequently automatically enrolled in alumni associations, this is not the case in European nations such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. Following the lead of American institutions, most Dutch universities have begun to invest in

cultivating links with former students and regional businesses. Nonetheless, in comparison to the United States, the majority of higher education institutions in the Netherlands lack a defined and sustained alumni programme. Alumni involvement in Europe, and particularly in Dutch higher education, is more typically in the form of non-monetary 'membership,' that is, voluntary contributions such as participating on advisory boards.



# FACTORS PREDICTING STUDENTS LOYALTY

**I**t is believed that alumni will report better involvement when they have a positive perception of their previous educational experiences in terms of the relationship they had with the institution. As a result, following graduation, such former students may become more loyal in terms of positive intentions such as positive word of mouth and actions, such as becoming a member of an educational advisory board.



This assumption is based on numerous principles from the service/relationship management field, as well as educational research literature, and is viewed through the lens of social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Emerson 1976). According to Zeithaml (2009), the philosophy of service and relationship management is to maintain and improve relationships with key stakeholders. Former students are important stakeholders in higher education. Favorable student-faculty connections may benefit higher education institutions by resulting in greater student involvement during their studies, such as positive recommendations from students

involvement during their studies, such as positive recommendations from students and students engaged in studying both inside and outside the classroom. Former students' involvement after graduation, such as presenting guest lectures and serving on an educational guidance council, could also be considered a benefit. How former students perceive the quality of their relationship with their educational faculty or staff may be an important predictor of how former students perceived their studies, that is, how engaged they were in studying, and, as a result, how they now feel connected to their former university and demonstrate their loyalty.

**Figure 1**  
A group picture of senior  
alumni and advisor



Last but not least, absorption is characterised by being completely focused and contentedly immersed in one's studies, whereby time goes swiftly and one finds it difficult to disengage from learning. Research on the three characteristics of student engagement—vigor, devotion, and absorption—was undertaken by Schaufeli et al. in the setting of higher education in 2002. According to prior studies, we anticipate that the more involved students are, the more favourably they will perceive their education. According to a recent study by Xerri et al. (2018), student participation in academic activities increased in direct proportion to the quality of the teacher-student connections. Thus, it is crucial to investigate the relationships between student engagement and loyalty, as well as the significance of relationship quality.



The strength of a relationship between two parties, such as that between students and faculty or staff, can be characterised as relationship quality in general. Student-faculty interactions are crucial in higher education, according to earlier studies. Having social interactions while attending university may potentially strengthen one's school attachment. According to recent studies, the conceptualization and measurement of relationship quality as it is used in consumer services can also be used in a framework of higher education. According to earlier studies based on the Roberts et al. (2003) study on relationship quality, relationship quality in higher education can be thought of as a five-dimensional construct. The five dimensions are affective commitment, affective conflict, satisfaction, and trust in goodness. Students' belief in the educational faculty and staff's credibility, sincerity, and ability to fulfil their responsibilities successfully and dependably is referred to as their trust in honesty.

Therefore, it is essential to begin by comprehending each student's unique needs in order to encourage students' happiness with the educational faculty/overall staff's performance and to demonstrate the educational faculty/knowledge staff's and empathy for students. It goes without saying that fostering links between students (i.e., future alumni) and higher education institutions can be advantageous for all parties in the long and short term, including alumni, local businesses, the government, and students.