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Research Article

Strategic Direction of a Local Government Unit-Funded College in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study aimed at determining the status of a local college in Aklan, Western Visayas and chart its strategic direction. Stakeholders composed of college students, parents, village officials, business owners, school personnel, local government employees, service providers such as boarding house owners, drivers, and graduating high school students provided data using a validated researcher-made survey questionnaire guided by the principles of SWOT analysis. Results revealed that the strengths of the college include its creation through a municipal ordinance, presence of a vision, mission, and goals, its strategic location, updated curricular programs, and the presence of a development plan. Its weaknesses are difficulties in recruitment and retention of faculty, integration of sustainable practices, limited space for expansion, minimal funding resources, and embracing of cultural diversity. The opportunities are possibility for expansion of academic programs, marketing and branding strategy, attraction of diverse students, internship and job placement opportunities in the tourism island, innovative research, and resource allocation for student services. However, threats identified include competition from other academic institutions, natural disasters and global health crises, economic fluctuations and budget cuts, changes in government funding regulations, and demographic shifts and changes in the labor market. A strategic direction for the college was crafted focusing on the areas of instruction, research, community engagement, production, internationalization, and administration where goals, objectives, strategies, programs, projects, and activities for the institution were underscored. Presentation of the proposed plan to the school administrators, stakeholders, and LGU officials was recommended.

Keywords: *Strategic direction, Local government unit-funded college, SWOT analysis, Stakeholders*

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Introduction

The UN Sustainable Development Goal Number 1 stipulates the provision to end poverty in all its forms everywhere while Goal Number 4 ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 8 aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], n.d.).

Section 3 under Republic Act No. 7722, otherwise known as the Higher Education Act of 1994, mandates the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to administer and supervise both public and private higher education institutions as well as degree-granting programs in all post-secondary educational institutions. CHED in the Philippines recognizes the pertinent provisions of the Republic Act 7160 of 1991, Article 3, Section 447 of the Local Government Code of the Philippines, specifically Section 447, No. 5 (x). which provides that, “subject to availability of funds and to existing laws, rules and regulations, [the LGU] shall establish and provide for the operation of vocational and technical schools and similar post-secondary institutions and, with approval of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, fix and collect reasonable fees and other school charges at said institutions, subject to existing laws on tuition fees.” (CMO No. 32, s. 2006, p.2). This gives the local government units (LGUs) an opportunity to venture into the tertiary level of education by establishing public colleges named as local colleges and universities (LCUs), sometimes called “community college”, “municipal college”, “city college”, or “public college”, financed directly from its local treasury (Pernia, 2017). Based on CHED Memorandum Order No. 32, Series of 2006, a local college or university refers to a public higher education established by the LGUs through an enabling ordinance.

Local colleges and universities (LCUs) are created by their local governments to directly provide and address the intellectual and socio-economic needs of their community (ALCUCOA, 2023). A local university or college is a public higher education institution established

and provided for operation by a municipality, city, or province. In Filipino, a college is referred to as a “dalubhasaan”, and “pamantasan” for university (CHED, 2022). In the Manual on the Setting Up and Operation of Local Economic Enterprises (LEE), the local college was classified under the other economic enterprises (OEEs) along with the markets and shopping centers, slaughterhouses, livestock trading, and animal raising; fish landing, ice plants, and cold storage facilities, post-harvest facilities, commercial retail and office spaces, public parks, sports and recreational facilities, public cemeteries, and local hospitals. The role of the LEE is to provide wider access to goods and services with pricing that is affordable to a larger segment of the LGU population, be a means to augment LGU revenues and attract investors by providing key services not provided by the private sector.

The Philippine Local Government Code (1991) serves as the basis for the creation and operation of LEEs including related circulars intended to strengthen compliance with the relevant provisions of the local government code and the national laws. The LEE policy framework defines that to be effective it must be one that contributes to the quality service delivery goals of the LGU. As such, an effective LEE must be designed, set up, operated, and managed under a well-prepared feasibility study and a detailed business plan that ensures the proposed LEE: a) clear vision, mission, goals, and objectives that fully respond to a particular constituency need; b) supports the LGU development goals and objectives embodied in its Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plan (PDPFP) if it is a province or Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) if it is a city/ municipality, and its corresponding Local Development Investment Program (LDIP) and Annual Investment Program (AIP); c) augments and does not compete with goods and services provided by the private sector; d) operates under the basic principle of financial self-sufficiency via cost recovery; e) uses a performance-based approach with efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery as requisites; and f) publishes annual performance reports that will provide accountability and transparency.

Section 15 of the Local Government Code (1991) states that the LGU serves as a political subdivision of the national government of the Republic of the Philippines, and as a corporate body representing its constituency. As such, it can undertake business enterprises for production and delivery of goods and services to its constituents such as the LEE. The same code also empowers the LGU to do business with the private sector, and partner with other LGUs in the operation and conduct in the delivery of social services.

With the increase of the National Tax Allotment (NTA) from 11% to 40% in 2021, a number of LGUs have decided to put up an LCU to cater to the needs of poor families who cannot send their children to higher education after completion of free basic education. Thus, the number of LCUs in the Philippines that offer short-term technical certificate courses, associate degrees or baccalaureate programs have increased. As of academic year 2021-2022, the Commission on Higher Education has listed a total of 136 LCUs in the country (CHED, 2023).

Rural community colleges have and continue to play a critically important role in meeting both local workforce demands and in promoting economic development (Katsinas & Miller, 1998). They have three distinct economic development service activities that include providing contract training, developing small businesses, and local economic-development planning (Miller & Tuttle, 2007).

In consideration of the migration and in anticipation of its future development as an agro-industrial zone that would require an increase in local and international requirements, this LGU in Aklan has adopted an ordinance for the creation, establishment and operation of a local government-funded college. It envisions to be the premier hall of knowledge of excellence in producing globally competitive alumni and contributors to a world class multidisciplinary development thrust of said locality as the center of major tourism development in the Northern Panay Peninsula. Since its operation in 2022, the college has started offering CHED-recognized undergraduate degree programs in tourism and hospitality management and entrepreneurship, and technical-vocational courses under the Technical Education and

Skills Development Authority (TESDA). It is guided by its corporate ethos but its strategic direction in the next decade and beyond is still work in progress.

Anchored on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis technique that “generates information helpful in matching an organization or group’s goals, programs, and capacities to the environment in which it operates” (Humphrey in CIPD, 2022), this study aimed at establishing the strategic direction of an LGU-funded college located in the northwestern part of Aklan. Specifically, it tried to determine the internal and external factors for setting the strategic direction of the college, its overall relative ranks of factors based on SWOT attributes, and its strategic direction in terms of instruction, research, community engagement, production, internationalization, and administration.

Methods

Design. This study utilized the mixed method design. It is the combination and integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study to provide a better understanding of research problems and complex phenomena than using only one (Molina-Azurin, 2016). This means that the quantitative data bring breadth to the study and the qualitative data provide the depth (Dawadi et al., 2021).

SWOT analysis was also utilized in this study to determine the environment within and around the organization. This approach is appropriate as it can help identify the strong and weak aspects in the organization, and the environmental opportunities and threats outside that may affect its strategic and predictive planning and management. It provides information helpful in matching what are the resources and capabilities of the organization with the competitive demands and expectations outside where it operates (Kumar & Praveena, 2023).

Participants. One hundred forty-five stakeholders of the local government-funded college participated and provided data to the study. Out of this number, 11 or 8% are business owners, 4 or 3% are college teachers, 14 or 10% are LGU employees, 17 or 12% are village officials, 38 or 26% are service providers,

2 or 1% are boarding house owners, 10 or 7% are upcoming college students, 17 or 12% are enrolled college students, and 32 or 22% are

parents of students. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants

Type of Community Stakeholders	Frequency	Sex		Percentage
		Male	Female	
Business owners	11	7	4	8.0
College teachers	4	0	4	3.0
LGU employees	14	5	9	10.0
Village officials	17	10	7	12.0
Service providers	38	27	11	26.0
Boarding house operators	2	2	0	1.0
Upcoming college students	10	4	6	7.0
Currently enrolled college students	17	6	11	12.0
Parents of college students	32	9	23	22.0
Total	145	70	75	100.0

Data Gathering Instrument. The experts-validated and pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire composed of the different indicators for SWOT attributes, and an interview guide were utilized in gathering data. The questionnaire asked about the profile of the participants, and included a 26-item indicator for strengths, 12 for weaknesses, 13 for opportunities, and 11 for threats.

Data Gathering Procedure. Preliminary activities, such as permits to conduct the study and initial verbal appointments, were complied with prior to the schedule of face-to-face interview. The SWOT tool served as basis in preparing the interview guide, with reference to the components identified in the objectives of the study. Final schedule for the interview of the identified participants was set. Prior to the process, the participants were briefed of their rights and ensured of the confidentiality concerns on whatever they would share to the researcher. They were also informed that the interview would be recorded and field notes would be visible as the procedures went on.

The interview and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the participants were conducted in the locale of the college, and the respective offices of the target participants. All recorded data were transcribed and main points were discussed and presented as results. Preliminary findings were presented back to the internal and selected external stakeholders for

validation and confirmation, and all the inputs suggested and approved were incorporated in the final report of results.

Ethical Consideration. Prior to the conduct of the study, transparency was already in place. Permissions were sought and assurance of non-disclosure of whatever information shared by the participants were emphasized. The rights of the participants were also highlighted and they were given the option to withdraw at any time they feel like their privacy was at stake.

Data Analysis. The data obtained were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to determine the overall relative ranks of factors of the LGU-funded college based on SWOT attributes.

Result and Discussion

Results and interpretations of the data shared by the participants are discussed in this section. They are presented to define answers to the objectives of the study.

Internal and External Factors of the Local Government Unit-Funded College as Determined by the Stakeholders

In this study, the internal factors of the local government unit funded college were analyzed in terms of the strengths and weaknesses while

the external factors were attributed to the opportunities and threats of the local college. The stakeholders who rated these factors included the college instructors, college students, parents, LGU employees, village officials, business owners, service providers, boarding house owners, and incoming college students.

Internal Factors

Strengths. Table 2 reveals the strengths of the LGU-funded college as determined by the stakeholders that include college teachers, currently enrolled students, parents, LGU employees, village officials, business owners, service providers, boarding house operators, and incoming college students.

Results showed that the creation of the college through a municipal ordinance, with an approved vision, mission, and goals ranked first among the identified strengths. This was followed by its strategic and accessible location, CHED-compliant academic programs, presence of a comprehensive development plan, and adequate budget from the LGU completing the top five. Less attention, however, was noted on indicators that pertain to student activities and issues such as alumni network, student diversity, participation of stakeholders in the crafting of the development plan, and partnership

with national and international organizations for knowledge exchange.

These findings are parallel to the strengths of the Riverside Community College District in California, USA, as identified by the District Strategic Planning SWOT Analysis Team (Reece et al., 2018). These include highly rated faculty members, campuses have a facilities master plan, and great success in acquiring extramural funding. These were also listed among the top strength of Virginia Western Community College in Virginia, USA, such as strong community reputation among others (Virginia Western, 2015). Some of the results mentioned in the study are almost the same observations enumerated in the studies of Almanie (2015), Thomas Miller and Associates (2015) for Joliet Junior College in Illinois, USA, in the SWOT report of Santa Barbara City College in California (2024), and in Los Medanos College in California (Environmental Scan, 2013).

In the case of a local college in Cebu, the political atmosphere stalled the issuance of a municipal ordinance; however, with the persistence of the local chief executive, and support from the other stakeholders, it was finally operated with an initial budget allotted by LGU and soon granted the CHED license to operate to serve the interests of the community (Pernia, 2017b).

Table 2. Overall Rank of Factors Based on Strength

SWOT Statements (Internal Factors)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Strengths	4.00	.55	
1. The college was created by a municipal ordinance, with an approved vision, mission, and goals.	4.42	.75	1
2. The college has an approved Comprehensive Institutional Development Plan.	4.10	.87	4
3. The college has an approved 5-year budget plan for 2020-2024.	4.02	.85	8
4. The board of trustees acts as the governing board of the college.	4.01	.85	11.5
5. The officers of the administration are appointed by the LGU.	4.07	.83	6
6. The college has highly qualified and experienced faculty.	4.10	.84	11.5
7. The college's PDP and CIDP were crafted with the participation of the external stakeholders.	3.84	.83	24
8. The college's faculty, staff and students are informed and regularly consulted of its plans, programs, projects and activities.	3.97	.88	15.5

SWOT Statements (Internal Factors)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
9. The college's community extension, outreach programs and activities are supported by the internal and external stakeholders.	4.01	.69	11.5
10. The college has a strong support from other agencies and organizations for its infrastructure development.	4.01	.86	11.5
11. The college's curricular programs offered are compliant to the policies set by regulating agencies as the CHED, TESDA, DBM, DILG, DOT, and others.	4.14	.82	3
12. The college receives adequate budget allotted by the LGU to develop the infrastructure, and pay the required benefits of the employees.	4.08	.83	5
13. The college has a high graduate employment rate in the tourism industry.	3.93	.86	18
14. The college offers a wide range of flexible and responsive curriculum that adapts to the evolving needs of the industry.	4.01	.75	11.5
15. The college's location is strategic and accessible.	4.21	.79	2
16. The college has established partnerships with leading national and international organizations and companies for knowledge exchange.	3.86	.92	23
17. The college has a research-focused culture that drives innovation and contributes to the industry.	4.03	.77	7
18. The college receives professional, technical, and financial support for its research undertakings from external sources.	3.89	.79	22
19. The college's officials, faculty, and staff qualifications are consistent with the criteria set by regulating government agencies.	3.97	.80	15.5
20. The college's faculty and student outputs are published and acknowledged by reputable institutions.	3.92	.84	19
21. The college maintains faculty and student-initiated production service/s relevant to the programs offered.	3.90	.82	21
22. The college has modern and well-equipped facilities that cater to the needs of students.	3.91	.84	20
23. The college maintains a library with up-to-date books, professional journals, and other references.	3.94	.82	17
24. The college has a diverse student body that reflects cultural diversity.	3.90	.79	26
25. The college has a strong alumni network that supports current students and graduates.	3.73	.88	25
26. The college has a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters growth and development.	4.01	.89	11.5

Weaknesses. Table 3 shows the weaknesses of the LGU-funded college as identified by the internal and external stakeholders. The challenges of recruiting and retaining highly qualified faculty in tourism, as well as the integration of sustainability practices in academic programs and operations was listed as the top

two weaknesses of the institution. This was followed by the limited space for infrastructure development, and specific budget for the expansion of its academic programs. It was also noticed that the college has a problem in coping with the socio-cultural and extracurricular interests of students due to limited budget on this

aspect, and in dealing with cultural diversity considering that there are interested students coming from an indigenous group living in the area.

Attracting and retaining qualified faculty is, indeed, a challenge particularly in rural areas. In the US, teachers in rural districts leave because of relocation, personal reasons, poor benefits, and uncertain opportunities, aside from the higher pay offered by neighboring districts (Hammer et al., 2005). Rural colleges' top challenge was fiscal constraints (Betts, 2017) as they cannot offer the financial, cultural, and social benefits that schools from urban areas can (Murray, 2007).

The same weaknesses were listed by Reece et al. (2018) such as the persistence of equity

gap among men of color, non-provision of job placement services, and heavy dependence on state appropriation. While the local college in Aklan consider the limited space for college expansion as a weakness, the Riverside College Districts consider it as strength. In Virginia, Western (2015), the SWOT analysis showed that lack of productivity in the funding model and lack of funding for academic support is among the top weaknesses. Studies made by Almanie (2015), in Los Medanos College in California (Environmental Scan, 2013), and by Thomas Miller and Associates (2015) for Joliet Junior College in Illinois, USA, in the SWOT report of Santa Barbara City College in California (2024)) revealed almost similar findings.

Table 3. Overall Rank of Factors Based on Weaknesses

SWOT Statements (Internal Factors)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Weaknesses	3.16	.97	
1. The college has limited funding and resources to support the expansion of its academic programs.	3.22	1.13	4
2. The college faces challenges in retaining and recruiting highly qualified faculty in the field of tourism.	3.26	1.08	1.5
3. The college has limited technology and infrastructure that hinder the delivery of quality education.	3.12	1.13	8
4. The college struggles to attract a diverse faculty pool that reflects the cultural diversity of the Philippines.	3.14	1.12	6
5. The college has limited research opportunities for students and faculty.	3.12	1.19	8
6. The college has a minimal number of internship and job placement opportunities in the tourism industry.	3.01	1.17	12
7. The college faces challenges in integrating sustainability practices in its academic programs and operations.	3.26	1.12	1.5
8. The college has a limited budget for student services and extra-curricular activities.	3.12	1.18	8
9. The college faces challenges in maintaining its relevance in the rapidly changing tourism industry landscape.	3.08	1.18	11
10. The college has a limited marketing and branding strategy that hinders its visibility and reputation in the industry.	3.10	1.16	10
11. The college has a limited space for expansion and infrastructure development.	3.23	1.08	3
12. The college is coping to attend to embracing cultural diversity to its student applicants.	3.21	1.12	5

External Factors

Opportunities. Table 4 indicates the opportunities of the LGU-funded college as determined by the internal and external stakeholders. The top 3 opportunities that are available in the community and should be considered by the institution include the expansion of its tourism programs considering the increasing demand for graduates with skills in hospitality services in the tourism island of Boracay in Malay, Aklan, enhancement of its programs marketing and promotion so that its presence is felt in the market, and open admission of students with diverse backgrounds to widen its academic reach.

With the current influx of international and local tourists coming to visit the world-renowned island beach resort, the college should expedite its transformation from being a school catering to the needs of the residents to become an international institution where diverse culture meet, learn and earn. According to Cepar and Bojnec (2010), the demand for tourist services is a factor that encourages demands for higher education in the field of tourism. Aguado (2019) concluded that the employability of tourism graduates of Lyceum of the

Philippines-Laguna in 2013-2017 implies that there are many job placements and opportunities available to tourism management graduates.

These identified opportunities are also among those found on the external positive loci of the Riverside College Districts (Reece et al., 2018). As stated, these opportunities are their central location in ethnically diverse regions, and improvement of technology would enhance student experience. It was also mentioned that increasing the government budget would translate into more program offerings considering that there was an observed growth in the industry sector in the region. Also, this is almost true to the identified opportunities of Virginia Western (2015) citing that marketing its strengths and developing greater collaboration between workforce and academic departments are good starting points. The same observations were noted in the studies made by Almanie (2015), Thomas Miller and Associates (2015) for Joliet Junior College in Illinois, USA, in the SWOT report of Santa Barbara City College in California (2024), and in Los Medanos College in California (Environmental Scan, 2013).

Table 4. Overall Rank of Factors Based on Opportunities

SWOT Statements (External Factors)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Opportunities	4.02	0.63	
1. The college operation is recognized by government and non-government agencies and institutions.	3.86	.89	13
2. The college can develop new internship and job placement opportunities for students in the industry.	4.06	.84	5.5
3. The college's faculty and students are offered scholarship opportunities by outside donors and sponsors.	3.87	.89	12
4. The college can establish partnership and collaboration with local and international tourism organizations and companies to enhance its industry connections.	4.05	.78	8
5. The college can expand its academic programs to meet the growing demand for specialized tourism education.	4.12	.75	1
6. The college can attract a more diverse student population through targeted outreach and marketing efforts.	4.07	.80	3
7. The college's student interns, practicumers, and job trainees are welcome in available and willing host establishments in Boracay, Malay, Aklan.	4.06	.86	5.5

SWOT Statements (External Factors)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
8. The college can leverage technology to enhance the delivery of its academic programs and improve student learning outcomes.	4.03	.78	9.5
9. The college can strengthen its research capabilities to drive innovation and contribute to the tourism industry.	4.06	.76	5.5
10. The college can integrate sustainability practices in its academic programs and operations to align with the growing trend in the industry.	4.03	.76	9.5
11. The college can allocate more resources to student services and extracurricular activities to enhance the overall student experience.	4.06	.81	5.5
12. The college can establish partnerships with other academic institutions to enhance its academic offerings and research capabilities.	3.96	.82	11
13. The college can enhance its marketing and branding strategy to increase its visibility and reputation in the tourism industry.	4.10	.81	2

Threats. Table 5 lists down the threats of the LGU-funded college as perceived by the stakeholders from inside and outside the institution. Accordingly, the top indicators are: competition in the offering of tourism related programs by popular institutions in the province and the region; impact of disasters and health emergencies; economic fluctuations and their effect resulting to budget cuts from the LGU; changes in government funding regulations; and demographic shifts and labor market demands.

As Muharto et al. (2017) put it, competitiveness occurs because of the existence of supporting and related industrial activities such as hotel, inn, manpower, restaurant, and café, as well as the number of tourist visits. In the case of this local college, it has the mission of providing quality education ... taking into account the current global and international competition to bring out high caliber graduates who will play prominent roles in the sustainable development of the municipality's socio-economic, tourism and environmental thrusts (Malay College 5-year Development Plan 2020-2024). But in Aklan, there are at least seven other higher education and technical schools offering tourism-related courses, and a bigger number in the whole Western Visayas region.

As Rossello et al. (2020) analyzed, a disaster in a country has economic consequences as it affects arrival of foreign tourists aside from the damages it brings to infrastructure, and other attractions. Ultimately, it will undermine investment into tourism and reduce destination attractions.

In the Philippines, a range of natural hazards cause significant damage to infrastructure and impact on the country's tourism industry, particularly in regions that are heavily reliant on tourism. These disasters result in significant decrease in tourist arrivals and income for businesses that lead to massive job losses and economic downturns (Shimizu et al., 2023).

The SWOT results established by Virginia Western Community College in 2015 showed that some of the threats listed in the study are parallel with the ones established here, such as the threat in the decrease in government funding and budget support, the offering by other educational institutions of similar programs, and the modes of delivery of academic services. Some of these threats are also listed by Reece et al. (2018) in their report, like competition from other institutions of higher learning, increasing cost of education, as well as the lower per capita income of residents.

Table 5. Overall Rank of Factors Based on Threats

SWOT Statements (External Factors)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Threats	3.43	.79	
1. The college faces competition from other academic institutions offering tourism-related programs.	3.54	.98	1
2. The college is affected by changes in government funding and regulations that may affect its budget and operations.	3.48	.97	4.5
3. The college is vulnerable to economic fluctuations and budget cuts that may affect its funding and operations.	3.50	.93	3
4. The college faces challenges in adapting to changing industry trends and demands.	3.43	.91	7
5. The college is affected by demographic shifts and changes in the labor market.	3.48	.99	4.5
6. The college faces challenges in responding to the impact of natural disasters and global health crises on the tourism industry.	3.52	1.03	2
7. The college is affected by the negative perception of the tourism industry due to issues such as overtourism and sustainability concerns.	3.30	1.04	10
8. The college faces challenges in attracting and retaining international students due to absence of internationalization programs.	3.46	1.05	6
9. The college faces challenges on inclusivity issues in student admission.	3.26	1.01	11
10. The college faces the challenges on support services such as transportation, lodging houses, food stalls, school supplies stores, money transfer facilities, and others in the vicinity to cater to the needs of the academic community.	3.37	1.12	8
11. The college operation is dependent upon the priorities of the political leadership.	3.36	1.03	9

Strategic Direction of a Local Government Unit-Funded College*

The proposed strategic direction of the local college was crafted in relation to the identified SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the local college. The proposed strategic direction has four parts: I - College Corporate Ethos, II - Plan Framework, III - Monitoring Scheme, and IV - Communication Plan. It was strategized based on the area of instruction, research, community engagement, production, internationalization, and administration. Furthermore, goals, objectives, strategies, programs, projects, and activities were determined.

**Complete Strategic Direction Plan for the LGU-Funded College is available upon request from the authors*

Conclusions

SWOT results of the LGU-funded college reveal its legal ground to operate and offer recognized and accredited programs considering its adherence to provisions of laws and policies as required by the Local Government Code and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). These indicate that the college has a strong foundation and support from regulating agencies, the local government, and stakeholders in the community.

Its identified weaknesses are focused on human and physical resources, as well as budgeting concerns, cultural diversity issues and sustainability integration. These highlight areas where the college needs improvement to enhance its faculty quality, sustainability initiatives, physical capacity, financial resources, and cultural inclusivity.

Expanding tourism-related programs to meet industry demands, opening admission to diverse students, enhancing marketing and branding strategies, strengthening industry internship and job placement opportunities, up-scaling research and innovation, and allocating more resources to student services and extra-curricular activities are inputs of opportunities for the college. These provide avenues for the college to grow, excel, and contribute to the tourism industry.

Among the threats that the college must address are related to inter-institutional competition in curricular offerings, impact of environmental hazards and disasters to tourism, economic fluctuations, changes in government funding regulations, and demographic shifts and changes in the labor market. These threats emphasize the need for the college to stay competitive, adaptable, and resilient in a dynamic and evolving environment.

Hence, the proposed strategic direction crafted by the researcher is a highly recommended plan for the local college to adopt considering that the SWOT results served as bases in coming up with it. It highlights the college's commitment to excellence in teaching, research, collaboration with the community, industry engagement, internationalization, and promotion of innovation and productivity. Additionally, it contains key indicators per functional service areas of the college.

Specifically, the college administration has to review its human resource policies particularly on recruitment and retention, and at the same time the economic and social benefits it offers. Likewise, partnership and collaboration with the tourism industry have to be strengthened and enhanced to ensure that internship, job training, and immersion opportunities, as well as employment prospects are solidified.

The LGU administrators and policymakers may take risks in diversifying funding sources

for the physical infrastructure and academic support services by exploring grants from external sources. It may also venture into improving its marketing and branding strategies to attract diversified students and collaborators to further its reach in promoting the college outside of the community, aside from involving its alumni and staff.

Considering the SWOT of the college, other local colleges and universities, and community schools may have better options adopting the good practices derived from the findings and improve on areas that may hamper their operation.

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