

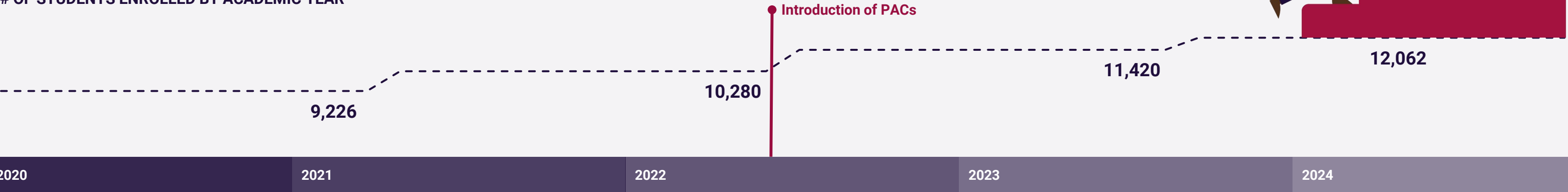
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES: ALIGNMENT TO INDUSTRY

KUMASI TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, GHANA

In 2020, Kumasi Technical University (KsTU) participated in national benchmarking with Vitae 360° Assessment – sponsored by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). The goal of this initiative was to better prepare students for the labor market and stabilize career opportunities for graduates across Ghana. As a result, in 2022 KsTU launched industry-led advisory bodies at the program level across its departments. These bodies are also known as program advisory committees (PACs).



OF STUDENTS ENROLLED BY ACADEMIC YEAR



ENDORSEMENT OF PACS BY FACULTY

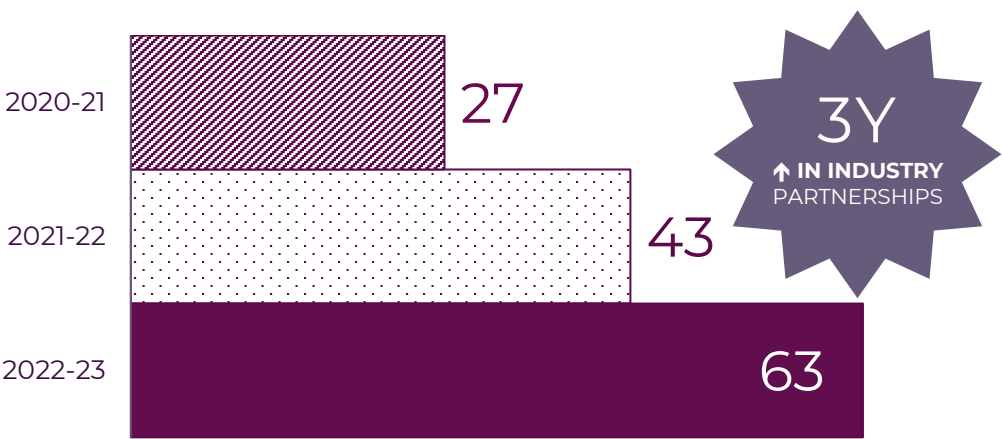
% of departments that formed PACs



Heads of departments at KsTU attended training to learn how PACs could improve their programs. The training highlighted the role industry can play in improving graduate skills, employment prospects, work-integrated learning opportunities, and new program curriculum development. Ultimately, 23 of 27 departments committed to starting a PAC.

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

Cumulative # of Industry Partnerships by Academic Year



Before assessment, KsTU reported 27 departmental-based industry partnerships. After one academic year of training and planning, the university formed 19 new partnerships with industry and an additional 23 by the end of 2023. There was exceptionally vibrant participation in the Chemical Engineering, Building Technology, and Banking and Finance departments.

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT OUTCOMES

Following the introduction of PACs

KsTU PAC RESULTS:

- STUDENTS PLACED IN WIL ✓
- STUDENTS PLACED IN EMPLOYMENT ✓
- STUDENT MENTORSHIP ✓
- EQUIPMENT DONATIONS ✓
- PROGRAM CURRICULUM CHANGES ✓



As a result of industry involvement and PACs, the university was able to provide students with job placement, access to work integrated learning (WIL), and professional mentorship. The university also received dozens of donations in materials, equipment, and time in form of seminars, mentorship, and hands-on training.



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Kumasi Technical University Advisory Committee Success

In an interview with IFC, leaders from Kumasi Technical University and members of the Program Advisory Committees (PACs) share how the PACs have enhanced the university's employment strategy and helped to secure accreditations.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Program Advisory Committees (PACs) are volunteer groups of external industry experts advising university programs to boost student outcomes. Each program typically has its own PAC.

Why create program advisory committees?

Following IFC's assessment, we needed a mechanism for industry players to bring their expertise to us and explain what they were looking for in terms of skills and knowledge. That way we could incorporate their input into our curricula and better prepare graduates to enter industries.

We began by training the heads of departments and explained the benefits of having PACs and encouraged each department to set them up. 23 of 27 departments participated. It was huge!

Did you face obstacles in setting up the PACs?

Yes, due to the nature of the work, we sometimes needed experts on campus to discuss curriculum development or to observe if students in labs were using industry best practices. Initially, the university did not budget for the expense of bringing them in, but we eventually gained their support.

We also needed to convince members that joining was important to the university and to student employability. We emphasized that at the end of the day members were helping the nation, industry, and the institution.

Another issue was that some of the staff would end up nominating PAC members who were their friends or relatives. Those members would go the extra mile, but if there was a change in leadership it would become difficult to retain those members. Since then, we've made a huge push to recruit

members that are alumni. They tend to have a greater commitment and love for the Institution, so the Vice-Chancellor is pushing for us to have a strong departmental and university-wide alumni relations.

Simon, as a member of industry, why did you join this advisory body?

As a member of the KsTU Program Advisory Committee, I have been part of the Institution's impactful work in enhancing the practical skills and employability of its graduates. This work is inspiring as it ensures the academic programs meet industry standards and prepare students for a dynamic job market. My decision to join the advisory body was driven by a desire to contribute to this important mission.

Was there a regulatory benefit to establishing PACs?

Yes, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission requires us to show evidence that our programs have been examined and approved by industry experts before we can offer them to students. Before PACs, it was more difficult to prove we met their requirements. There was a lot of back and forth, and sometimes our applications were rejected. PACs reduced the time we needed to go through the accreditation process because members analyzed the issue immediately and ensured the program followed industry standards. On the other hand, this helped the University match the formal, mandatory accreditation requirements to real-world industry examples.

Are there other notable outcomes of the PACs?

There are several. In the Department of Estate Management, PAC members began organizing seminars for the students. We've had several placements, attachments and even jobs, especially for students in the procurement and supply chain



management program, agricultural and automotive engineering departments. We've also had a few donations. Results like this are something we track, so our programs can continue to get budgetary support.

What can you share about your use of KPIs, industry feedback, and surveys?

Data is powerful. It provided the evidence we needed to make many changes. One thing we discovered that we were losing students because of program names, as with the Bachelor of Technology. The degree was not well understood by students or employers. We changed the degree name to Bachelor in Engineering, added more specialties in engineering, automotive, mechanical, and civil electrical, etc. The education authority was emphatic that name changes must match the curricula and be specific. This is where PAC members' insights were critical. As a result, we now offer a Bachelor of Science/Engineering in a number of engineering departments.

Was it difficult to gather data from so many departments?

It's not too difficult, but if we leave it to the departments, they won't log it, so we try to collect their data every semester.

Did PACs impact the university's reputation?

It is early days, but as an administrator I can see the impact. At this point, it is difficult to tell whether the students also see positive changes. We need more data to measure the impact of PACs on student and graduate employability in years to come.

Do you have any other advice?

For the PACs to work, the university management must be in full support. They must be willing to provide the necessary funds. Everybody must participate and commit fully.