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A Needs Assessment on Establishing an IT Student Organization for Skills Development and Representation

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Abstract— This study presents a comprehensive needs assessment (NA) to investigate the perceived necessity for establishing a student organization dedicated to Information Technology (IT) skills development and campus representation among Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) students at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) Peñaranda Off-Campus. Given the rapidly evolving industry, student organizations are increasingly recognized as vital non-academic avenues for improving soft skills, which are essential for career success. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, 284 BSIT students were surveyed to explore their awareness of IT career opportunities, interest in organizational participation, and existing challenges in professional skill enhancement. Results indicate a strong demand for more structured, co-curricular learning platforms, mentorship programs, and formal student representation. Findings highlighted key challenges for implementation, such as potential scheduling conflicts and budget constraints. The study offers recommendations that emphasize securing institutional support, developing a clear governance structure, and conducting continuous evaluation to ensure the organization's sustainability and alignment with academic and contemporary industry demands. This NA provides an empirical foundation for policy development aimed at empowering IT students in their holistic professional growth and active campus engagement.

Keywords— Information Technology, Student Organization, Skills Development, Campus Representation, Mentorship, Needs Assessment, Higher Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the fast-evolving landscape of higher education, the integration of Information Technology (IT) education faces the continuous challenge of preparing graduates whose skills match the dynamic demands of the global industry (Hidayah et al., 2022; Rahmat et al., 2022). While formal curricula provide the necessary technical foundation, a graduate's success is increasingly determined by a combination of both hard (technical) skills and soft skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and leadership (Kunaenih & Muharam, 2022; Demafelix, 2025). Industry reports and tracer studies show significant skill gaps in areas like problem-solving and communication among new graduates, emphasizing the need for supplementary development (Oboza, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2020). Consequently, institutions are encouraged to provide robust co-curricular programs to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical workplace competencies (Leksuwankun et al., 2023).

Student organizations serve as a vital mechanism for facilitating this essential holistic development (Baker, 2008; Fredricks, 2011). Participation in these groups is consistently linked to positive outcomes, including enhanced



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self-efficacy, improved academic performance, and stronger self-regulation of goals (Leksuwankun et al., 2023; Buckley & Lee, 2021). For IT students specifically, these platforms offer the ideal setting for practical application of classroom learning, networking with peers and professionals, and the development of crucial soft skills in a low-stakes environment (Abebe et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2022; Pang et al., 2019). By participating in organizational management and activities, students also hone leadership skills and improve their ability to effectively manage their academic and extracurricular commitments (Abebe et al., 2024; Astin & Astin, 1996).

Recognizing the positive impact of organized student life on a university's educational objectives, the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) has prioritized a comprehensive range of student services, including support for student clubs and organizations, to facilitate holistic student development (Bulawat et al., 2025). However, a formal student organization tailored specifically to the needs of the BSIT students at the Peñaranda Off-Campus, with an explicit mandate for skills development and formal representation, has yet to be established. Therefore, this study undertakes a needs assessment to empirically determine the level of student demand, identify the specific skill-building activities required, and evaluate the feasibility of establishing a dedicated student organization to serve the professional and institutional interests of the IT student community (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1994; Brown, 2001).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The necessity for establishing a specialized Information Technology (IT) student organization at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) Peñaranda Off-Campus is grounded in extensive educational theory regarding co-curricular programming, skills development, and student governance. This review explores the key theoretical and empirical foundations supporting the findings of the subsequent Needs Assessment.

A. The Critical Role of Co-Curricular Engagement

Student organizations are globally recognized as indispensable components of the co-curricular experience in higher education, serving to complement and extend the formal academic curriculum (Baker, 2008). They provide a practical, non-classroom environment where students can apply theoretical knowledge and develop essential social and professional competencies (Abebe et al., 2024; Fredricks, 2011). Research consistently shows a strong positive correlation between active involvement in these groups and enhanced academic outcomes, including improved self-efficacy, better academic performance, and stronger self-regulation of goals (Buckley & Lee, 2021; Leksuwankun et al., 2023).

Furthermore, institutions like NEUST officially recognize the profound role of student services and organizations in promoting the holistic development of their students, emphasizing welfare, psychological growth, and goal-setting that extends beyond mere academic instruction (Bulawat et al., 2025). This institutional support creates a strong foundation for any new student-led initiative, ensuring alignment with the university's broader mission.

B. Addressing the IT Skills Gap: Hard Skills and Soft Skills

The rapidly evolving IT industry demands professionals who possess a functional balance of technical expertise (hard skills) and critical interpersonal attributes (soft skills) (Khuraisah et al., 2020). Simply mastering the



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technical curriculum is often insufficient; a graduate's success is now heavily determined by proficiency in areas such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving (Kunaenih & Muharam, 2022).

Industry studies, particularly those focused on the Philippine context, routinely report significant soft skill gaps among new IT graduates (Demafelix, 2025; Oboza, 2017).

Student organizations function as critical laboratories for cultivating these 21st-century competencies:

- *Practical Skill Application:* IT-focused student groups allow members to execute technical projects, host workshops, and engage in competitions, facilitating the application of classroom learning to real-world scenarios and promoting technical skill enhancement (Leksuwankun et al., 2023; Rahmat et al., 2022).
- *Leadership and Initiative:* Assuming officer roles or leading project teams helps students develop skills in decision-making, delegation, organizational management, and personal initiative—attributes highly valued by employers (Abebe et al., 2024; Astin & Astin, 1996; Fay & Frese, 2013).
- Networking and Mentorship: These groups provide vital platforms for connecting students with industry professionals and alumni, facilitating mentorship that accelerates career readiness and development beyond formal schooling (Herbert et al., 2020; Pang et al., 2019). Studies indicate that this experiential learning is key to bridging the gap between university expectations and workplace demands (Jackling & Natoli, 2015).

C. Student Representation and Democratic Governance

Beyond personal and professional skill-building, student organizations are key mechanisms for campus representation and the promotion of democratic consciousness within the Higher Education Institution (HEI) (Hidayah et al., 2022).

A formal, recognized body allows the IT student community to have an organized, collective voice, ensuring their specific academic, resource, and welfare needs are effectively communicated to the university administration (Lu & Zhang, 2024). This structured participation is vital for students to exercise their rights in matters affecting their educational experience, contributing to the broader civic engagement goals of the university and strengthening their sense of community (Baker, 2008).

D. The Needs Assessment Framework

This study is structured around the Needs Assessment (NA) framework, which is defined as a systematic process for identifying and prioritizing gaps between a current condition and a desired outcome (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1994). In educational contexts, NAs are crucial for ensuring that new programs, such as a student organization, are targeted, relevant, and sustainable (Brown, 2001).

By gathering empirical data from the target population—the BSIT students—the NA identifies specific skill gaps, measures the actual demand for organizational activities, and forecasts potential implementation challenges (e.g., resource allocation), thus providing a data-driven basis for effective organizational design and policy recommendations (Leksuwankun et al., 2023).



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III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design (Brown, 2001; Bulawat et al., 2025). This approach was selected to systematically gather and quantify the characteristics, perceptions, and needs of the target student population regarding the establishment of a specialized IT student organization. A descriptive design is optimally suited for a Needs Assessment (NA), which fundamentally aims to determine the gap between the current state (students' skill levels, resources, and representation) and a desired professional outcome (job-ready graduates with strong soft skills and formal representation), thereby providing an empirical foundation for program development (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1994; Leksuwankun et al., 2023).

B. Research Locale and Respondents

The study was conducted at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Peñaranda Off-Campus, located in Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija, Philippines.

The target population consisted of all students officially enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) program at the campus during the time of the study. A total of 284 BSIT students participated as respondents. This comprehensive inclusion was aimed at achieving a full representation of the student body's needs.

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C. Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool utilized was a researcher-made, validated survey question naire (Bulawat et al., 2025). The instrument was meticulously designed to elicit quantitative data aligned with the core objectives of the needs assessment. The questionnaire was structured into several distinct parts:

- 1. Student Profile: Basic demographic and academic information (e.g., year level).
- 2. **Perceived Need and Demand:** Gauging the students' interest in organizational membership and their belief in the necessity of a dedicated IT-focused organization (Abebe et al., 2024).
- 3. *Skill Gaps and Challenges:* Exploring students' self-assessment of their current hard and soft skills (e.g., leadership, communication) and identifying the non-academic challenges they face in professional development (Kunaenih & Muharam, 2022; Oboza, 2017).
- 4. **Prioritized Activities:** Identifying the specific co-curricular programs (e.g., technical workshops, leadership training, mentorship) that students would most prioritize for implementation by the organization (Leksuwankun et al., 2023; Pang et al., 2019).

The instrument was subjected to expert validation to ensure content and face validity and was pilot-tested to confirm reliability and clarity of the items before its final administration.

D. Data Collection Procedure

1. *Institutional Approval:* Formal written permission and ethical clearance were obtained from the NEUST-POC administration and the Chair of the IT department at the Peñaranda Off-Campus.



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- Administration: The questionnaire was administered to the target population, likely employing a census approach given the small, specific population of BSIT students at the off-campus site (Bulawat et al., 2025).
 Data collection was scheduled to maximize participation while minimizing disruption to academic activities.
- 3. *Ethical Considerations:* All participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, and their participation was voluntary and anonymous, with strict adherence to confidentiality protocols.

E. Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data were processed and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Descriptive statistics formed the core analytical framework (Brown, 2001). The primary statistical tools employed included:

- 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution:* Used to summarize demographic information and the distribution of categorical responses.
- 2. **Weighted Mean**: Computed to determine the average level of perception, interest, and demand across the various dimensions of the needs assessment.
- 3. *Ranking:* Employed to order the identified skill gaps and students' preferred organizational activities based on the magnitude of the weighted mean scores, providing a clear prioritization for policy and program development (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1994).

These descriptive analyses provided the empirical evidence necessary to diagnose the existing needs and formulate evidence-based recommendations for the student organization's structure and programming.

IV. RESULTS

A. Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 284 out of 320 Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) students participated in the survey. Table 1 below summarizes the demographic distribution of respondents by gender and year level.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents by Gender and Year Level

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	174	61.3
	Female	110	38.7
Year Level	1st Year	71	25.0
	2nd Year	83	29.2
	3rd Year	67	23.6
	4th Year	63	22.2

The data indicate a higher representation of male students, which is consistent with typical gender distributions in IT programs. Respondents spanned all year levels, offering a comprehensive perspective across academic stages.

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Gender Distribution of Respondents Female 61.3%

Figure 01: Gender Distribution of Respondents

B. Perceptions on IT Skill Development Opportunities

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement on statements related to IT skill opportunities and the need for an IT-focused student organization. Table 2 presents mean scores, standard deviations, and the percentages of agreement (ratings 4 or 5 on the Likert scale).

Table 2: Summary of Student Perceptions on IT Skill Development and Organizational Need

Statement		Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
Need more oppo	ortunities to develop IT skills	4.02	0.93	71.8
Limited campus	activities for IT advancement	3.47	1.11	41.2
Interested in att	ending IT-related training	3.52	1.07	44.7
Believe they can compete with other schools		3.96	0.95	65.8
Establishing an	IT organization is beneficial	4.05	0.91	70.4
Organization helps represent the campus		4.00	0.95	69.4
Need regular mentorship and guidance		4.03	0.92	70.4
Willing to join tl	ne proposed IT organization	3.52	1.08	44.0

The results highlight strong agreement on the need for increased IT training, mentorship, and campus representation through an organized body.

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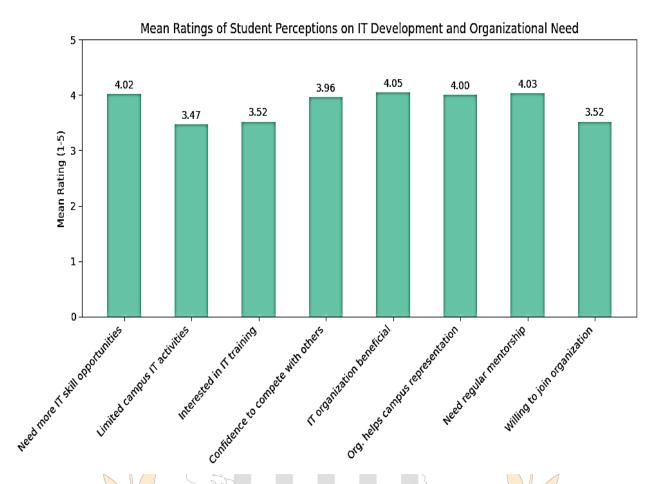


Figure 02: Mean Ratings of Student Perceptions on IT Development and Organizational Need

C. Fields of Comfort and Development Interest

Students identified their most comfortable IT fields and those they wished to develop further. Table 3 summarizes these preferences.

Table 3: IT Fields of Comfort and Development Interest

Field	Most Comfortable (%)	Field to Develop (%)
Programming	38.7	45.4
Web Development	24.3	28.2
Networking	15.5	12.7
Graphic Design	11.6	7.7
Cybersecurity	5.3	6.0
Others (Database, Multimedia, etc.)	4.6	-

Programming and web development emerged as dominant areas of both confidence and desired growth, suggesting these should be focal points for the proposed organization's activities. Figure 3 presents a comparative horizontal bar chart of comfort versus development interests by IT field.

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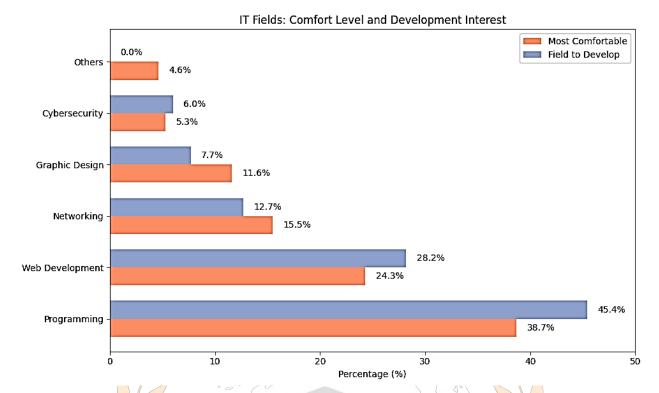


Figure 3: Comparative Chart of Comfort and Development Fields

D. Challenges and Suggestions

Open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify key challenges and student recommendations. Table 4 categorizes the most recurring themes.

Theme Frequency Representative Responses "Budget in establishing the organization." Lack of budget/resources 32 "Few IT-related seminars available." Lack of training opportunities 29 "Difficult to manage time with class schedules." Time and academic workload 21 Need for mentorship/guidance "Require regular mentoring and workshops." 18 **Unclear organization plans** 17 "Have clear goals and plans each semester."

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of Challenges and Suggestions

The predominant concerns were financial constraints and scarcity of training and mentorship opportunities, underscoring the necessity for institutional and administrative support.

These results provide comprehensive quantitative and qualitative insights into student perceptions, interests, and challenges related to establishing an IT skills development organization at NEUST—Peñaranda Off-Campus.

IV. DISCUSSION

The empirical findings of this needs assessment, which indicate a strong demand and perceived necessity for a dedicated IT student organization at the NEUST Peñaranda Off-Campus, strongly affirm the principles established



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in the literature regarding co-curricular development and professional readiness. The results validate the core hypothesis: a significant gap exists between the students' current developmental resources and their desired level of professional competence and institutional representation.

A. Validation of the Need for Holistic Development

The high level of student interest in joining a dedicated organization (as inferred from the strong demand finding) directly supports the literature that frames student organizations as vital mechanisms for holistic growth that complement formal academic instruction (Baker, 2008; Fredricks, 2011). Students at NEUST appear to recognize that success in the contemporary IT field requires more than technical knowledge; it demands the self-regulation, leadership, and social skills cultivated through extracurricular activities (Buckley & Lee, 2021; Leksuwankun et al., 2023). This eagerness to participate reflects a proactive student body seeking to maximize their university experience, aligning with the institutional goal of comprehensive student development (Bulawat et al., 2025).

B. Bridging the Critical IT Skills Gap

A central finding of the needs assessment is the explicit demand for structured training, skills development platforms, and mentorship programs. This is a critical finding that connects the local campus environment directly to a global problem: the persistent soft skills gap among IT graduates (Kunaenih & Muharam, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2020). Previous studies on Philippine graduates have identified deficiencies in critical non-technical areas such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving (Demafelix, 2025; Oboza, 2017).

The proposed student organization directly addresses this deficit by shifting the locus of learning from the theoretical classroom to a practical, experiential setting (Herbert et al., 2020). Implementing targeted programs—such as inter-team projects, case competitions, and workshops—moves beyond mere instruction to provide the applied learning that leads to genuine skill mastery (Jackling & Natoli, 2015).

Furthermore, the demand for mentorship highlights the students' acute need for career guidance and networking, which are crucial for developing career self-efficacy and successfully transitioning into the professional workforce (Pang et al., 2019). The organization acts as a conduit for this industry-alumni connection, facilitating the practical application of knowledge in a way formal coursework often cannot (Rahmat et al., 2022).

C. Empowerment and Formal Representation

The demand for formal campus representation signifies that BSIT students seek an organized voice to articulate their specific needs to the campus administration. This need is consistent with the principles of democratic engagement and the value co-creation model in higher education, where organized student bodies are essential for constructive dialogue and institutional improvement (Astin & Astin, 1996; Lu & Zhang, 2024).

By granting the organization formal status, the campus empowers the students to take ownership of their educational environment, fostering leadership and social responsibility (Abebe et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2022). The organization, in this capacity, functions as an active governance partner rather than simply an activity provider.



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D. Confronting Implementation Challenges

While the student demand is strong, the findings concurrently highlight realistic challenges to implementation, specifically budget constraints and potential scheduling conflicts. These are typical institutional hurdles that can undermine the sustainability of any new program (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1994). Scheduling conflicts, in particular, can suppress participation, negating the organization's intended positive effects (Fredricks, 2011). Successfully overcoming these challenges requires a commitment from the campus administration to provide not just permission, but dedicated institutional support—including resource allocation and academic flexibility—to ensure the organization's long-term viability. The long-term benefits of producing highly job-ready graduates who exhibit initiative and strong leadership (Fay & Frese, 2013) far outweigh the initial investment required to mitigate these logistical challenges.

All things considered, the results of this needs assessment clearly show that creating a dedicated IT student organization is more than just a good idea—it is essential for NEUST Peñaranda Off-Campus to successfully develop competitive and well-rounded IT professionals.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

This study assessed the perceived need for establishing a student organization focused on IT skills development and campus representation among BSIT students at NEUST—Pearanda Off-Campus. The findings reveal a strong consensus on the importance of structured opportunities for technical growth, continuous mentorship, and peer collaboration. Over 70% of respondents affirmed the need for more IT-related development activities and recognized the potential benefits of a dedicated organization in enhancing campus representation. Although immediate willingness to join the organization was moderate at 44%, this represents a substantial starting base with significant growth potential as awareness and programming improve.

The study highlights critical institutional gaps in enriching technical skills and mentorship, which structured student organizations can effectively address. Establishing such an organization aligns with global trends in higher education that emphasize experiential learning, leadership development, and community engagement in IT education. Addressing barriers like funding limitations and scheduling challenges through institutional support is essential for sustainable implementation and success.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. **Formal Establishment of the IT Student Organization:** NEUST-POC should officially recognize and support the creation of an IT-focused student organization under the BSIT program. Collaboration with faculty advisers is critical for governance, strategic planning, and alignment with academic objectives.
- Implement Regular Training and Mentorship Initiatives: Organize workshops, coding boot camps, mentorship sessions, and industry engagements targeting high-interest fields like programming and web development. Leveraging alumni and IT professionals as mentors can enhance the quality and relevance of these programs.



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- 3. **Develop Clear Governance Structure:** Establish a constitution, define leadership roles, and articulate semester-based goals to promote transparency, accountability, and effective management. This will build student trust and encourage active participation.
- 4. **Secure Institutional and Financial Resources**: Allocate budget or provide access to university facilities and resources to support organizational activities. Seek external sponsorships and partnerships with IT companies to supplement funding and expand opportunities.
- 5. **Promote Student Awareness and Engagement:** Use digital communication platforms, orientations, and campus events to boost visibility and attract new members. Engaged and informed students are more likely to sustain momentum for organizational growth.
- 6. **Monitor and Evaluate Organizational Impact:** Conduct regular assessments of activities and member feedback to ensure the organization's goals are met and aligned with evolving academic and industry needs. Continuous improvement should be embedded in organizational culture.

By establishing this student organization, NEUST will cultivate a collaborative environment that fosters IT competencies, leadership skills, and institutional pride, ultimately contributing to the development of highly capable IT professionals ready to meet contemporary challenges.

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