

MAPPING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALDERSGATE COLLEGE (1989-2023): STRENGTHENING THE ACIAN BRAND

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ABSTRACT

This study mapped the development of Aldersgate College from 1989 to 2023 using Huerta and Zuckerman's institutional theory as an analytical lens. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with 25 key informants, participant observation, and document analysis of institutional records. Findings revealed that the College operates within a hybrid institutional environment characterized by the coexistence of Methodist heritage, regulatory compliance, and market-oriented academic professionalism. Institutional boundaries evolved through mission-vision revisions aligned with accreditation requirements and global education standards. Organizational structure strengthened through leadership continuity, academic program expansion, human resource professionalization, infrastructure growth, and financial stabilization. Accountability mechanisms matured through accreditation, quality assurance systems, research institutionalization, and community-based extension initiatives. The study demonstrates that Aldersgate College sustained legitimacy by balancing tradition and innovation, spirituality and professionalism, and local responsiveness with global competitiveness. Institutional development was shaped not only by internal strategic decisions but also by external regulatory, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures. The findings contribute to institutional theory by illustrating how mid-sized private higher education institutions in developing contexts navigate institutional complexity. The study recommends establishing a Culture and Arts Center and a Heritage and Innovation Council to formalize organizational memory and strengthen institutional identity.

Keywords: *accountability, institutional theory, organizational development, private higher education, values-based education*

INTRODUCTION

Institutions like schools are created to fulfill society's fundamental needs for lifelong learning. Understanding how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) adjust to growing demands for flexible, inclusive, and lifelong learning requires tracing their development. UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning emphasizes that HEIs play key roles in promoting lifelong learning by fostering knowledge, developing skills, and mobilizing resources for different populations. This shift involves encouraging students from various backgrounds to pursue higher

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education at different ages and stages of their personal and professional lives.

Analyzing how HEIs implements UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4, promoting "inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all", can highlight successful practices and areas needing improvement. Despite growing recognition, many institutions focus more on formal degree programs than accessible lifelong learning options, showing strong need for meaningful change.

Studying Aldersgate College's development in this context is both relevant and valuable. First, it offers insights into how a local Philippine HEI organizes leadership, governance, and resource allocation to support lifelong learning. Second, analyzing its combination of education, research, and extension activities can reveal best practices and areas for improvement, informing policy and strategy. The study highlights the transformative role of mid-sized HEIs in developing countries in fostering lifelong learning and social equity.

While Hombrebueno (1989) established Aldersgate College's historical significance by emphasizing its sociocultural, moral, and economic contributions to the community, the study did not account for organizational and academic developments in subsequent decades. In contrast, this study examined Aldersgate College's development from 1989 to the present, focusing on leadership succession, evolution of mission, vision, and goals, academic program development, human resource trends, physical infrastructure expansion, and financial sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

This study applied Huerta and Zuckerman's (2009) four dimensions of institutional theory to analyze Aldersgate College's growth: organizational environment, boundaries, structure, accountability, and effectiveness measurement. The organizational environment refers to internal and external forces shaping institutional behavior, including global agendas such as UNESCO's SDG 4. Organizational boundaries explain how institutions interact with communities and stakeholders through extension and partnership activities. Organizational structure examines leadership, governance, academic units, and resource allocation. Accountability and effectiveness focus on quality assurance, accreditation, and social impact.

Institutional theory challenges the idea of organizations solely internally driven by goals and technical skills. It suggests that institutions often align operations with external expectations to gain legitimacy, even if procedures are inefficient or merely symbolic. This explains why institutions develop similar structures and practices over time. According to institutional theorists, legitimacy stems from conformity with widely accepted standards (Huerta & Zuckerman, 2009). Aldersgate College was viewed as an institution where faith-based principles, expert guidance, adherence to rules, and profit motives are interconnected. These elements influenced how the college responded to external challenges, adjusted its institutional goals, reformed its curricula, and developed strategies to remain competitive. Decisions were driven not only by practicality but also by the need to maintain credibility, coherence, and alignment with broader social expectations.

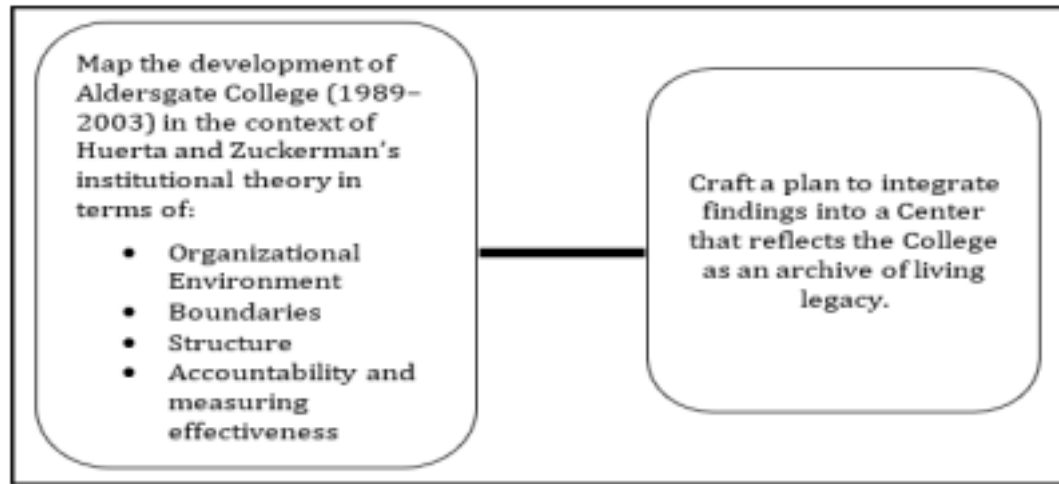


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Research Objectives

This study sought to:

1. map the development of Aldersgate College (1989–2023) in the context of Huerta and Zuckerman's institutional theory in terms of:
 - a. organizational environment
 1. ▪ boundaries
 2. ▪ structure
 3. ▪ accountability and measuring effectiveness
2. craft a plan to integrate findings into a Center that reflects the College as an archive of living legacy.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design grounded in institutional theory. The approach was appropriate for examining how Aldersgate College adapted structurally and culturally within a dynamic institutional environment from 1989 to 2023.

The study was conducted at Aldersgate College in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya. Twenty-five key informants were selected through purposive sampling based on sustained engagement with the institution and direct knowledge of its development.

trajectory. Participants included former and current administrators, long-serving faculty and staff, alumni representing different five-year intervals, and community residents.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of institutional records, accreditation documents, enrollment reports, human resource data, infrastructure plans, and financial summaries. The interview guide was expert-validated before data collection.

Data analysis followed Huerta and Zuckerman's four institutional

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dimensions: environment, boundaries, structure, and accountability. Thematic analysis was employed through inductive coding, while textual analysis examined symbolic expressions in mission statements, policy documents, and institutional narratives.

Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation of interviews, observations, and archival documents. Member-checking was conducted by allowing selected participants to validate summarized interpretations. Ethical clearance was secured from Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organizational Environment

Aldersgate College operates within a hybrid institutional environment shaped by religious heritage, state regulation, and market competition. This reflects institutional complexity, where organizations navigate multiple, sometimes competing, logics (Lounsbury et al., 2021).

Although legally non-sectarian, the College maintains a strong Methodist heritage, illustrating normative institutional pressures rooted in religious identity. Simultaneously, compliance with CHED regulations and accreditation requirements represents coercive pressures. Market-driven academic professionalism and enrollment competition introduce mimetic pressures, prompting structural and strategic adaptation.

This coexistence of spiritual, regulatory, and market logic demonstrates institutional isomorphism, where organizational forms evolve to align with dominant societal expectations while preserving distinctive identity. The College's ability to sustain legitimacy across these domains indicates successful institutional balancing rather than passive conformity.

Boundaries

The evolution of mission and vision statements from 1989 to 2023 reflects boundary negotiation in response to external institutional pressures. Early statements emphasized Christian service and community relevance. Later revisions incorporated the language of global competitiveness, innovation, and outcomes-based education.

These changes illustrate symbolic conformity to accreditation frameworks and global education discourses. Accreditation through ACSCU-ACI and PACUCOA functioned as a coercive and normative legitimizing mechanism, requiring curriculum restructuring, faculty credential enhancement, and systematic quality assurance.

Thus, institutional boundaries were not static; they were renegotiated to

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maintain legitimacy in increasingly formalized regulatory environments. However, the continued integration of Methodist values indicates selective adaptation rather than total assimilation into market logics.

Structure

Leadership transitions at Aldersgate College functioned as adaptive responses to shifting institutional contexts rather than mere administrative succession. Each presidency aligned with prevailing environmental demands: infrastructural expansion during competitive growth phases, consolidation during accreditation intensification, and digital transformation in response to post-pandemic educational restructuring.

Program expansion reflects mimetic institutional behavior, as the College diversified its offerings in nursing, engineering, business, and criminology to remain competitive among Philippine private HEIs. Faculty professionalization and infrastructure development demonstrate normative alignment with national quality assurance standards.

Enrollment fluctuations reveal sensitivity to demographic and economic conditions, illustrating how institutional survival requires strategic responsiveness to environmental signals. Financial strengthening through diversified revenue sources further indicates strategic alignment between mission continuity and operational sustainability.

Accountability and Measuring Effectiveness

Accountability mechanisms evolved from informal performance monitoring to institutionalized quality assurance systems. Board passing rates, TESDA certifications, and accreditation levels became formal indicators of effectiveness, reflecting the institutionalization of measurable standards.

Research institutionalization through the Research and Development Center and Research Ethics Committee represents the structural embedding of scholarly norms. Extension programs, particularly CREATE initiatives, demonstrate how accountability expanded beyond internal academic performance to community impact and social engagement.

These developments illustrate institutional maturation, where legitimacy derives not solely from symbolic alignment but from measurable performance outcomes integrated into organizational systems.

Proposed Institutional Integration Framework

To operationalize the study's findings, the proposed Aldersgate College Center for Culture and Arts (ACCCA) serves as an institutional mechanism for preserving and institutionalizing organizational memory. The Center would function not merely as an archival repository but as a structural embodiment of institutional identity.

The ACCCA would integrate leadership narratives, accreditation milestones, research outputs, and community engagement records into a curated institutional

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memory system. Establishing a Heritage and Innovation Council would formalize governance over institutional storytelling, ensuring continuity across leadership transitions.

This framework aligns symbolic heritage preservation with strategic branding and institutional legitimacy, thereby reinforcing both historical continuity and adaptive innovation.

Table 1: Leadership Succession of Aldersgate College (1989–2023)

President	Term of Service	Major Institutional Contributions
Dr. Junifen F. Gauuan	1990–2014	Expansion of academic programs; strengthening of research initiatives; infrastructure development; establishment of blended learning systems; initiation of global partnerships
Dr. Prescilla Esperanza A. Soriano	2015–2022	Accreditation consolidation; quality assurance reforms; continued infrastructure expansion; program enhancement and institutional stabilization
Rev. Micah Ryan B. Ramel	2022–Present	Digital transformation initiatives; promotion of open distance e-learning; rights-based development; strategic institutional branding

Table 2: Accreditation Milestones and Quality Assurance Developments

Year/Period	Accrediting Body	Programs Covered	Institutional Impact
Early 1990s	ACSCU-ACI	Initial program accreditations	Strengthened Christian higher education standards; reinforced institutional identity
2000s	PACUCOA	Education, Nursing, Business	Curriculum revision; faculty credential upgrades; quality assurance system development

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2010s	CHED Compliance (OBE Implementation)	Institution-wide	Outcomes-based education adoption; alignment with K-12 reforms
2020s	Multi-level Accreditation	Multiple undergraduate and graduate programs	Institutional legitimacy enhancement; improved public trust and competitiveness

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that Aldersgate College's development from 1989 to 2023 reflects sustained institutional adaptation within a hybrid environment characterized by religious heritage, regulatory governance, and market competition. Through the lens of institutional theory, organizational evolution was shown to result from negotiated alignment with coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures.

The findings extend institutional theory by providing empirical illustration from a mid-sized private Philippine higher education institution, highlighting how institutional complexity is navigated in developing contexts. The College's trajectory reveals that legitimacy is maintained not through passive conformity but through strategic balancing of tradition and innovation.

Institutional boundaries evolved symbolically through mission revisions and compliance with accreditation standards. Organizational structures strengthened through leadership continuity, professionalization, and infrastructure expansion.

Accountability mechanisms matured through measurable standards in instruction, research, and extension.

The proposed Culture and Arts Center represents a structural innovation that formalizes institutional memory, ensuring that heritage and adaptive capacity remain integrated into future development.

Recommendations

1. Aldersgate College should establish a Leadership Continuity and Innovation Framework, a strategic model capturing best practices, leadership milestones, and transition protocols. This will ensure each new administration builds on the successes and lessons of predecessors while innovating to meet emerging needs, balancing tradition with transformation.
2. Create a Values-Based Institutional Practice Manual explaining how core

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values are reflected in instructional methods, research themes, and extension efforts. This manual can serve as a practical guide for faculty and staff in aligning academic and civic responsibilities with the college's philosophical and ethical foundations.

3. Develop the Aldersgate College Center for Culture and Arts (ACCCA) to preserve institutional memory, celebrate heritage, and strengthen the ACian brand. The Center should include historical archives, cultural exhibits, a leadership gallery, a research repository, and community engagement spaces.
4. Establish a Heritage and Innovation Council comprising administrators, faculty, alumni, and community representatives to oversee preservation initiatives, guide institutional storytelling, and ensure continuity between past achievements and future aspirations.

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