

**Active University, Interactive Alumni:
Examining Institutional Advancement and
Building Alumni Relationships in an Irish University**

Maria Luciana Gallo

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'Institutional Advancement is an institutional commitment.'

A.W. Rowland 1986

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Abstract

This thesis presents an Irish university case study—*Ollscoil*—which examines alumni relationships and Institutional Advancement (IA). The research question is: *How has IA emerged in an Irish university setting to build relationships with alumni?* IA is defined as a strategic approach to building relationships with key university players—including alumni—to increase support for the institution (Jacobson 1986). Communications, development (fundraising) and alumni relations are the three main IA components.

IA at *Ollscoil* is adapted from international IA practice. The *Ollscoil* IA offices are new and mirror the three IA components. Initially separate from other University functions, IA practice is becoming more integrated within the institution, responding to the higher education climate. The findings suggest that IA plays an increasingly significant role in steering the *Ollscoil* strategy. I contend that IA is also a catalyst in addressing the priorities of the University, such as increasing student enrolment, building the University's profile and elevating its position in international university rankings. Through IA practice, these priorities are fostered by alumni relationships.

An alumni relationship building cycle, developed by consulting IA literature, provides the framework for analysing the case study. The role of the offices in charge of IA is to educate the University community on the new IA practice and to highlight the merits of alumni relationships for the individual as well as for the institution. IA systems, such as the alumni database, set a foundation for organising the alumni connections. The positive student experience, reported at *Ollscoil*, anchors alumni affinity to the institution. Social events entice alumni to re-engage with *Ollscoil*. Volunteering and philanthropy are also ways for alumni to “give back” to their *alma mater*. The findings show that individual alumni are at different stages of the relationship cycle and progress through this cycle by interacting with the University and with each other. IA at *Ollscoil* steers alumni interaction from a closed self-centred focus to an open altruistic one.

Building alumni relationships is the output of successful IA practice. The outcome is the benefit of these interactions for *Ollscoil*: from creating strong advocates to the ultimate advancement of the University. The title, ‘Active University, Interactive Alumni’ suggests that as IA takes root at *Ollscoil*, it creates ideal conditions for dynamic lifelong relationships between the institution and the alumni.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
Table of Figures.....	6
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	7
1.1 Setting the Scene	8
1.1.1 Purpose of the Study - Main Research Question	8
1.1.2 Aims, Objectives and Field of Inquiry.....	10
1.1.3 Origins of IA	11
1.1.4 Position of Researcher	16
1.1.5 Motivation.....	20
1.1.6 Gaps in the Literature.....	21
1.2 Development of the Study.....	26
1.2.1 Summary of Methodology	26
1.2.2 Summary of the Framework for Analysis.....	26
1.3 Summary of Thesis.....	28
Chapter 2 Methodology	31
2.1 Considering the Methodological Design.....	33
2.1.1 Practical Elements of the Study	34
2.1.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations	35
2.2 Case Study Rationale and Design	37
2.2.1 Choosing a Case Study	38
2.3 Selecting Methods	38
2.3.1 Choosing Observation as a Method	39
2.3.2 Choosing Documentary Analysis as a Method	40
2.3.3 Choosing Interviews as a Method	40
2.4 Reflecting on, Evaluating and Justifying Methods	41
2.4.1 Observation: Reflection, Evaluation and Justification.....	42
2.4.2 Documentary Analysis: Reflection, Evaluation and Justification	44
2.4.3 Interviews: Reflection, Evaluation and Justification	46
2.4.4 Validity and Triangulation of Methods.....	49
2.5 Data Analysis	50
2.5.1 Stages of Data Analysis	51
2.5.2 Analysis of Data Collected with Different Methods.....	53
2.5.3 Presentation of Data Analysis	55
2.6 Summary	55
Chapter 3 Input: The Emergence of IA at <i>Ollscoil</i>	57
3.1 IA and the Global Context.....	58
3.2 Key Characteristics of IA as a Framework for Analysis.....	62
3.3 Higher Education Conditions in Ireland.....	65
3.3.1 The <i>Ollscoil</i> Response to the Higher Education Context	67
3.4 Key Characteristics of IA at <i>Ollscoil</i> within the Institution.....	71
3.4.1 IA as Interdependence at <i>Ollscoil</i>	72
3.4.2 IA as Integration at <i>Ollscoil</i>	75
3.4.3 IA as Identification at <i>Ollscoil</i>	79
3.4.4 IA as Inherent at <i>Ollscoil</i>	83
3.5 Analysis of the Emergence of IA at <i>Ollscoil</i>	85
3.6 Summary and Implications for the Main Research Question.....	88
Chapter 4 Output: IA and Building Relationships with Alumni.....	90
4.1 Governance and Building Relationships	91

4.1.1	University Governance.....	92
4.1.2	Interactive Governance	93
4.1.3	Interactive Governance and the Analysis of Output	94
4.2	IA cycle for Building Alumni Relationships.....	96
4.2.1	Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Affiliation	99
4.2.2	Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Affinity	100
4.2.3	Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Engagement	101
4.2.4	Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Support.....	103
4.3	<i>Ollscoil</i> and IA: Building Alumni Relationships	105
4.3.1	IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Affiliation at <i>Ollscoil</i>	106
4.3.2	IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Affinity at <i>Ollscoil</i>	108
4.3.3	IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Engagement at <i>Ollscoil</i>	114
4.3.4	IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Support at <i>Ollscoil</i>	119
4.4	Analysis of Outputs: Alumni Relationships and Interactions	124
4.4.1	Diversity and Alumni Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i>	124
4.4.2	Dynamics and the Alumni Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i>	127
4.4.3	Complexity and Alumni Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i>	129
4.5	Summary of IA and Building Alumni Relationships at <i>Ollscoil</i>	133
Chapter 5	Outcome: IA and Relationship Building at <i>Ollscoil</i>	137
5.1	Outcomes: Constructing the Analysis	139
5.2	Outcome of Building Alumni Relationships at <i>Ollscoil</i>	140
5.2.1	Affiliation and Outcomes for <i>Ollscoil</i>	141
5.2.2	Affinity and Outcomes for <i>Ollscoil</i>	148
5.2.3	Engagement and Outcomes for <i>Ollscoil</i>	153
5.2.4	Support and Outcomes for <i>Ollscoil</i>	158
5.3	Summary	164
Chapter 6	Discussion and Conclusion	172
6.1	Summary of Findings	173
6.1.1	Input: The Emergence of IA at <i>Ollscoil</i>	173
6.1.2	Output: IA Practice at <i>Ollscoil</i> as a Relationship Building Tool.....	177
6.1.3	Outcome: Building Relationships with Alumni at <i>Ollscoil</i>	181
6.2	Implications for the Main Research Question.....	184
6.3	Significance of the <i>Ollscoil</i> Case Study	186
6.3.1	Contributions to the Object of Study and Field of Inquiry	186
6.3.2	Reflections on the Study	188
6.3.3	Future Research.....	189
6.4	Conclusion.....	191
References	193
Appendix A:	Participant Information Sheet	200
Appendix B:	<i>Ollscoil</i> Field Notes Listing	201
Appendix C:	List of <i>Ollscoil</i> Documents (with pseudonyms)	202
Appendix D:	List of <i>Ollscoil</i> interviews.....	205
Appendix E:	Summary of Initial Themes from Primary Research	206
Appendix F:	Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms	207
Appendix G:	Sample Interview Questions	208
Appendix H:	Excerpt from <i>Ollscoil</i> Field Notes (FN-01, 3-4).....	209
Appendix I:	Excerpt of Researcher's Diary (Learning Journal)	210
Appendix J:	Excerpt from an <i>Ollscoil</i> Interview Transcript	211

Table of Figures

Figure 1	Overview of the Study in Visual Form	28
Figure 2	Origins of IA: The Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) showing the American University Climate influencing the Emergence of Institutional Advancement (IA)	60
Figure 3	Origins of IA: The Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) and the IA Response in the American University System	61
Figure 4	The Three Components of Institutional Advancement	63
Figure 5	<i>Ollscoil</i> considering the Irish Higher Education Conditions	68
Figure 6	Using the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) to outline the Emergence of IA Components on <i>Ollscoil</i> Relationships	69
Figure 7	IA components and practice at <i>Ollscoil</i>	73
Figure 8	Characteristics of IA on the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983):	86
Figure 9	IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni	97
Figure 10	IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni applying the Orders of Governance (Kooiman 2003) as a Heuristic Device	98
Figure 11	Diversity of interactions using the IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni	126
Figure 12	Dynamic of interactions using the IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni	129
Figure 13	Complexity of interactions using the IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni	132
Figure 14	Outcomes of Affiliation Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i> :	146
Figure 15	Outcomes of Affinity Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i> :	151
Figure 16	Outcomes of Engagement Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i> :	157
Figure 17	Outcomes of Support Interactions at <i>Ollscoil</i> Building Relationships with Alumni using IA practice	163
Figure 18	<i>Ollscoil</i> Outcomes mapped on the IA Relationship Building Cycle	166

Chapter 1 Introduction

A university is not what the alumni say it is, but it is what the alumni make it. The alumni are the permanent body about the university; the faculty and the officers are merely transitory. So it falls upon the alumni to back up the school and get behind the movements started for its advancement (Warwick 1913 cited Webb 1998, p.214).

Almost a century after Warwick delivered these impassioned words Institutional Advancement (IA) emerged as a movement spreading beyond the borders of the initial American audience to many educational institutions around the world, including Ireland. To set the stage for this study, I present two short vignettes to illustrate IA in an Irish university context:

December 2007:

University College Dublin reported on a successful inaugural telephone fundraising campaign. Students generated over €250,000 from alumni to fund bursaries and student projects. The Vice-President of Development, Áine Gibbons, explained in the internal publication, 'UCD News,' that the pilot scheme was rooted in similar campaigns held in the UK and the United States (University College Dublin 2007).

November 2006:

University of Limerick launched the Alumni 360° programme, engaging alumni in all aspects of the university, including in the recruitment of prospective students through school visits. Alumni representatives on the University governing body were involved in establishing and participating in the programme (University of Limerick 2006).

These vignettes present simple examples of IA in Irish universities, as defined in this study. More closely, the vignettes show the institutions' attempts to build relationships with past graduates, the alumni of the institution, along with the significance that these relationships play within the institution. The aim of this study

is to deconstruct the university-alumni interactions and relationships, in the context of IA, with emphasis on the impact of these relationships for an Irish university.

1.1 Setting the Scene

In this study, I define Institutional Advancement as a concerted and strategic approach to building relationships with key university actors to increase support for the institution. IA is comprised of three components: communications and marketing, alumni relations and development (fundraising). To put these IA components into practice, universities establish separate organisational structures, such as separate IA offices.

Marketing strategies, alumni reunions and fundraising campaigns are increasingly more common across university settings. IA practice is growing in popularity across the higher education sector worldwide. When I began this study, I discovered that IA was an under-researched area of higher education, especially in an Irish and European context. How does a concept like IA become so familiar in practice to many, and still manage to remain so elusive? This study will provide a closer examination of IA, with particular reference to an Irish university setting.

1.1.1 Purpose of the Study - Main Research Question

It was through anecdotal accounts that I first noticed the emergence of IA in Irish higher education settings. My initial observations prompted the following questions: What constitutes IA practice? How has IA emerged as a concept? How has IA emerged in Ireland? The purpose of this study is to explore how IA has become a part of an Irish university and the role of IA as a relationship-building tool. By refining my research parameters, I devised the main research question as:

How has Institutional Advancement emerged in an Irish university setting to build relationships with alumni?

This question presents a basic input-output scenario: IA is introduced into an Irish university setting; the university builds relationships with alumni¹. The question can be divided into two separate questions for the analysis: *How has IA emerged in an Irish university setting?* This addresses the analysis of *input*. *How does IA build relationships with alumni in an Irish university setting?* This analyses the *output*.

To bring a third dimension to this study, I add two supplementary questions: *Why is building relationships with alumni significant to an Irish university?* *How does building relationships with alumni benefit and impact the institution?* This enables the basic input-output scenario to be critiqued and adds an *outcome* dimension. As IA emerges in an Irish university setting, the University builds relationships with alumni, and these relationships impact the advancement of the institution. Through a case study of an Irish university, I provide an in-depth analysis of this process from *input* to *outcome*. To illustrate this progression, I add the final supplementary question: *To what extent does interactive governance help explain the role of IA in the alumni-University interactions and relationships to advance the institution?* This question relates to the research framework, a combination of introducing IA concepts with interactive governance, explained in further detail at the end of this chapter and in the analysis.

This study is incremental: building the *input*, *output* and *outcome* of IA in an Irish setting. Thus, the thesis is divided into three parts. Each part is a separate, self-contained chapter, with a background, literature review and framework for analysis, followed by the relevant findings and analysis of results. First, the study examines the emergence of IA in an Irish university setting as a borrowed concept, with practice adapted to an Irish context. I argue the emergence of IA in the case study

¹ In this study I use *alumnus* and *alumna* interchangeably when referring to a single member of the alumni community.

university is in response to the higher education climate, both on a national and international basis.

Second, the study discusses the extent to which IA in an Irish university setting is as a relationship building tool with alumni, as the output to respond to the input. To view and analyse the case study findings, a cycle for building relationships with alumni is developed. To focus on the role of the alumni relationships to the institution, I employ interactive governance as a heuristic device.

Finally, the initial outcome of the input-output process is analysed, focusing on the benefit of the alumni relationship-building for the institution. *What does the Irish university gain in building relationships with alumni?* The impact of these relationships to the institution is examined through the case study data as perceived, observed, anticipated and demonstrated, with an emphasis on the ultimate benefits to the institution.

1.1.2 Aims, Objectives and Field of Inquiry

This study aims to generate a critical analysis of IA as a concept and illuminate IA in the context of an Irish university setting. The two research objectives of the thesis are:

- 1- To map the emergence of Institutional Advancement in an Irish university setting*
- 2- To analyse the emergence of IA to build relationships with alumni to impact and benefit the institution.*

Thus, IA in an Irish university setting as the object of study is located in a specific field of inquiry. While IA is a taken-for-granted feature of North American universities, IA is not as familiar a concept in Irish higher education. So the field of inquiry for this study is an Irish university setting as a terrain unfamiliar with IA as a concept. What adds an intriguing dimension to this study is the emergence of IA practice within the Irish university sector, following a worldwide trend. The field of

inquiry is narrow, examining the role of IA as a relationship-building tool and as a practice with direct benefits to the institution.

This unique field of inquiry poses a number of challenges in conducting the study. IA literature concentrates primarily on the operational aspects of IA, written for those working within the IA sector. Thus, designing an appropriate methodology for this case study is challenging and will be discussed in Chapter Two. Moreover, higher education literature makes only peripheral reference to IA as a concerted concept or as a practice, discussed in Chapter Three. To address both challenges, I apply IA literature to create new IA paradigms to analyse the qualitative data gathered from the case study.

1.1.3 Origins of IA

For generations, universities in the United States and the United Kingdom maintained elitist networks of graduates. To live up to its name of “nourishing mother,” or *alma mater*, an institution would offer exclusive networking for alumni in exchange for philanthropic support (Tromble 1998, p. xvii). This self-perpetuating process created a closed circle, with generations of the same family attending and then supporting, an institution to preserve tradition. The modern version of IA extends this elitist network to a wider universal one, which arose as a result of a greater demand for higher education.

Since the 1970s, IA changed from a movement to a professional practice. The following IA definitions present an internal discourse, understood by those working in IA, influencing a wider public understanding of IA practice:

- 1- Institutional Advancement is the management process primarily responsible for maintaining and improving the relationship of an institution of higher education with society and selected publics in a way that most effectively contributes to the achievement of the institution’s purposes (Jacobson 1978 cited Jacobson 1986, p.18).

- 2- Advancement is a systematic, integrated method of managing relationships in order to increase an educational institution's support from its key outside constituents, including alumni and friends, government policy makers, the media, members of the community, and philanthropic entities of all types (Council for Advancement and Support of Education 2008).
- 3- As a functional part of the mission of an institution or organisation, institutional advancement provides meaningful and relevant education and information while it builds political and moral support for the institution (Tromble 1998, 441).
- 4- ...a profession devoted to the strategic management of long-term relationships with key constituencies (Lippincott 2004, 2).

Relationships are a shared component of these IA definitions, specifically relationships that are driven, monitored and managed for the benefit of the institution. These definitions imply that a university has established relationships with alumni, and the institution is responsible for sustaining these relationships. Weerts (2007) argues that the traditional model of IA is a one-way process with a university promoting itself outwards to the relevant stakeholders and the public. I contend that IA is an exchange: a university builds external relationships for the social and professional benefit of alumni; in turn these alumni relationships strengthen the legitimacy and connections for the institution. The onus is on the institution to apply IA practice to initiate, renew or extend commitment from external publics, including alumni, to the institution.

What distinguishes or identifies IA practice in a university setting? IA discourse outlines initiatives that demonstrate a public commitment to the institution with words like *devoted, support, contributes*. IA-initiated relationships also bring about change for the institution with words like *improve, increase, build*. As a

steering mechanism for an institution, IA is a conduit to strategically encourage publics to become part of the institution's advancement.

The IA definitions also employ business terminology: *management, strategy, key constituencies, purpose, mission*. Despite the links to business language, the definitions demonstrate IA is distinct to managerialism. Managerialism focuses on the market and not the academy as the producer (Trowler 2001, p.185), as will be argued in Chapter Three. While the focus of IA practice is on the market, its roots and focal point is the benefit it brings to the institution. Trowler claims managerialism is a top-down activity with '...an emphasis on individualism and an acceptance of the status quo' (Ibid). On the other hand, IA is an integrated, collective activity involving widespread internal and external support to bring about institutional change. While links between IA and managerialism may merit further study, the focus of this study is the role of IA in building relationships with alumni.

The IA literature concentrates on the formalisation of IA operations, offering a step-by-step, "how to" guide for implementation of IA practice. As a result, IA literature is predominantly a series of resources to enable those working on the development of an institution—management, administrators and IA-related staff—to put IA into practice or to improve IA activity. A case in point, the two key IA publications are operational manuals: Rowland's *Handbook of Institutional Advancement* (1986) is the seminal IA text, while Tromble's edited book *Excellence in Advancement: Applications for Higher Education and Nonprofit Organizations* (1998) elaborates further on building sophisticated IA systems. This literature tends to be hidden from public view, only accessed by a narrow group of individuals aware of the IA concept, wishing to inform themselves on improving in areas such as public relations, donor solicitations or alumni events. The definitions of IA provided in this

thesis come from this body of IA-insider literature and part of the purpose of this study is to expose IA to a wider higher education audience.

The subtext in the IA literature is the preservation of IA as a profession of specialist university administrators. The claim is that IA is a university necessity— a university constantly needs growth— implying an institution’s long-term dependency on an IA practice, thus the related organisational structure and IA personnel. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), an international membership network for advancement professionals, sets the standards for IA practice through organising seminars, publishing reference literature and coordinating local networks. With key specialist skills, the IA professional is an educator, imparting the role of the institution’s mission to the public (Buchanan 1997). The IA professional is also a steward, dedicated to serving the institution (Payton 1997). The IA literature refers to the crucial role of IA professionals and the academic faculty with the ability to transition smoothly to university leadership positions by embracing advancement activity, the crucial part of university leadership (Murphy 1997; Tromble 1998; Rowland 1986; Patton 1993; Dellandrea and Sedra 2002). Moreover, the post of President, and other leadership roles at the university, once reserved for senior faculty, are increasingly seeing appointments from advancement professionals (Murphy 1997). The complex nature of the senior management roles, especially in the area interacting with the public, ensure that the IA professional has less adjusting to do towards the demands of the post compared to their academic faculty counterparts (Fisher 1997).

IA also influences the governance structures of the university. Due to the complexities of IA work, it is recognised that the governance structures within a university are responsible for leading, legitimising and engaging in IA practice

(Patton 1993). The American university governing body, once a majority of academic faculty, has moved from State and academic appointments, to include alumni, benefactors and influential publics (Tromble 1998). This shift in governing body composition illustrates the increasingly important role of interactions with alumni and publics to the university.

IA is taken for granted in American universities. The IA literature focusing not on *why* engage in IA practice, but on honing instead the *how* of IA operations and adapting ideas and practice to different institutional settings. Moreover, as an organisational structure, IA integrates practice alongside all other departments and services across campus (Rowland 1986b; Muller 1986). In the literature, there are strong arguments made for the IA function:

Institutional Advancement is as vital and as essential as any other major function of a college or university (academics, business, research, student affairs, or health sciences)—in fact, in the long run, it makes possible the maximum achievement of all other functions of the institution (Rowland 1986b, p.6).

The hegemonic treatment of IA in the North American system contributes to steer a university's image, strategy, outreach and partnerships, demonstrating how IA has escalated as a dominant force in the growth of universities.

The American and Irish higher education systems are different. The aim of this study is not to compare them but to explore and to better understand IA as a phenomenon which makes an ever greater presence in the Irish university system. Muller (1986) contends that advancement in higher education is uniquely American, arguing universities in other countries are 'agencies of central government' (p.1) and not concerned with IA matters. More recently, Peterson (2002) acknowledges that IA has emerged as a practice in universities worldwide (p.ix). Therefore in a relatively

short time a foreign concept, born out of an American higher education system, is borrowed and expanded by universities outside of the United States.

IA is not a common a phrase used in the Irish higher education sector. Alternative phrases such as *development*, *public affairs* or *external relations* are more understood and familiar. I do not intend to prescribe terminology inconsistent with general use. I apply IA as a term that encompasses all three of IA components as a platform for discussing the emergence of the practice within an Irish context.

Despite the origins and embedded practice of IA in American universities, IA is not a widely studied aspect of higher education research, even in higher education management circles. Academic literature, including the *International Journal of Educational Advancement*, has extensive reports on the strategic and operational aspects of IA along with the effective use of practice. A critical study of IA as a concept is noticeably absent. IA research in a European context is virtually non-existent, despite the presence of the practice in universities across the continent (European Commission 2007). From a European perspective, IA is treated as a foreign concept and novel idea as opposed to an embedded practice in European universities. Even with the diversity in university systems, there remains a general acceptance of standard IA practice. Therefore if and when a university chooses to consider the advancement of the institution, international IA principles provide an easily-adopted formula. When the European Commission generated good practice guidelines for university fundraising, CASE was cited as the link for interested institutions as the resource that: ‘...builds up skills and confidence and helps to prevent institutions from “reinventing the wheel” (Ibid., p. 6).

1.1.4 Position of Researcher

My position as researcher, along with my motivation and interest in the topic, help me, not only to locate the study in the field of inquiry, but also, to understand

the rationale for the approach taken to the research. My previous IA work experience at a Canadian university, and more recently in an Irish university, provides me with a unique perspective and sparked my initial interest in this study. At present, I am removed from the seven universities in the Irish higher education system, working at a separate university college in Sligo, Ireland. I am conscious of the fact that I bring this study a particular perspective, which Troyna (1995) describes as ‘...all research from its conception through to the production of data, its interpretation and dissemination, reflects a partisanship which derives from the social identity and values of the researcher’ (p.403). I approach the study from both an insider and outsider point of view: I worked as an IA administrator in an Irish university and I currently view the system from the outside.

My experience of IA spans a number of years and covers different perspectives. As an undergraduate student in a Canadian university, I volunteered as a telephone fundraiser in asking graduating students for donations towards a class gift to “give back” to the institution. After graduation, I was hired by my *alma mater*, first in international student recruitment and eventually as the coordinator of the graduating class gift campaign. In this role, I trained over two hundred students a year to ask their fellow graduating students for donations to ‘give something back’ and leave a legacy to the institution. The programme proved popular with over CAD\$150,000 per annum raised towards small but worthwhile gifts such as park benches, upgraded computer equipment and student bursaries.

On attending a Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education (CCAEE) Newcomers to Advancement Conference, I recall the Chair extending congratulations to us, as the newest cohort of IA professionals, for choosing a career in advancement which would provide a wealth of lifetime career prospects. My IA

work diversified to the annual fund, including direct mail solicitations to carefully selected alumni groups. Working with over one hundred other advancement professionals also brought me exposure and experience in all three IA components: I provided copy for the alumni magazine, assisted with reunions, participated in a small way towards the multi-million dollar fundraising campaign for the university. My work then shifted towards alumni relations which involved organising programmes for recent alumni, including a student leadership reunion for hundreds of recent alumni returning to campus.

The testament from my first CCAE conference proved to be true: IA provides transferable skills and desirable experience. When I moved to Ireland, this background enabled me to quickly secure an IA post in a university. Once I began to work in Ireland, I observed that IA was new, not only in terms of organisational structures and practice, but also in terms of understanding of the IA role throughout the university. My colleagues in this IA office brought work experience from complementary fields of marketing, administration and management.

This personal history heightens my awareness of the importance of IA rhetoric for this study. The IA discourse is generated and controlled from the inside, by the advancement professionals in a university setting. I am familiar with the specialised IA language, used internally by advancement professionals: the acronyms, terms, initiatives and strategies. There is also a second IA discourse, generated by a university to a general audience. My experience provides a unique lens in which to view IA discourse in an Irish university setting, in the larger European, North American or even a worldwide system.

The relationship with my *alma mater* started as a student and extended as an alumna, demonstrating my lifelong linkage with IA over my adult life. I followed a

family tradition and attended the same institution as my father. While this legacy was important, I accepted a place at the university because it presented itself as the personification of a university as I viewed it, part of a North American collegial reverie, articulated by Palfreyman (2004) ‘...people want to associate themselves with “the best,” with “a real university”’ (p.37). Coming from a small suburban town, I was warned of the university’s academic prowess and immense size—over 40,000 students—and was disheartened by stories of loneliness, cut-throat competition among students and lack of activities outside the classroom. Nothing could be further from the truth as I was pleasantly surprised with the actual experience gained in the four years of my stay. My student life was enriched: The in-class experience with its inspiring and challenging professors, as well as vibrant extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities.

I continue to be active with my Canadian *alma mater*: I read the alumni magazine, attend reunions, and act as the university’s alumni regional representative for Ireland. I make regular donations to my university, in order to show my support to the university’s high quality education, its student experience, research in a myriad of academic fields and wide community initiatives. My level of engagement and support for my *alma mater* shows my commitment to IA principles, thus bringing a unique perspective and approach to this study. Carr (1995) and Abraham (1996) contend that researchers do research because of their interest and commitment in advancing the area of study. With limited academic IA research, my interest in this study extends beyond my background to a commitment in expanding IA as an object of study. I take a reflexive approach to this research, constantly evaluating my values and perspectives on the research design and data analysis.

To remain reflexive and manage my position in this study, I liken my role as a choreographer of the research process, ‘coordinator of the dance’ (Janesick, 2000 in Lincoln and Denzin 2000, p.379). O’Leary (2004) summarises this process:

The choreographer metaphor suggests a researcher who begins with a foundation of key principles, has vision, and tries to not have a limited view. The choreographer works by warming-up or preparation, exploration and exercise, and finally illumination and formulation (p.92).

Extending this metaphor, I view the analysis chapters containing each stage of choreography: the background and theoretical framework as the preparation, the findings of the empirical case study as the exercise and the analysis of my findings as the illumination components of the dance. I bring my own knowledge and assumptions to each component of this choreography, remaining reflexive throughout this process in order to create a smooth flow to the study. When considering my position as researcher, I consulted the list generated by Wellington (2000), including my values, ideas, knowledge, motivation and prejudices (p.43-44).

1.1.5 Motivation

Over the years, I have listened to the pleas from my university to “keep in touch” and since my graduation I have faithfully kept an uninterrupted connection with my *alma mater*. University Presidents, worldwide, use graduation ceremonies as the conduit to impart this declaration of fostering a lifelong relationship with the institution. As I moved to Ireland from Canada, I noticed that Irish universities used the same contact points with graduates, from sending alumni magazines to appealing for donations. Although higher education in Canada and Ireland are widely divergent—from State policy and institutional structures to the demographics and attitudes of students—IA has emerged as an embedded organisational structure and set of practices that is common to both higher education systems. *Why?* Initially, I was motivated by the analysis of IA itself and its relationship to governance, that is,

the power of these relationships within the institution to steer the direction of a university's activity and strategy. However, my motivation in designing this study evolved to examine the phenomenon from an institutional basis, including the role of IA as a relationship building tool with alumni. By studying the IA in an Irish university case study, I am closer to the initial emergence of this phenomenon and thus I can trace how it begins and becomes engrained in a university system.

My own university journey and professional work sparked my interest in IA as the object of study. I am interested in the dual role IA can play for a university: Externally, IA practice fosters interactions and develops relationships with key individuals to reflect back on the institution; internally, IA is a means to influence the institution's operations and address change. I have encountered research that criticises aspects of IA practice within universities as part of a managerialist or marketisation discourse, moving a university to adopt more corporate ideals. While I concede that this may be a perspective of IA practice from an outsider point of view, my approach and focus of this study is the IA practice and role it plays in interactions with alumni and the impact of IA on improving the institution. Moreover, by examining and addressing IA components collectively demonstrates my motivation of understanding IA as an object of study and analysis. Thus, I am motivated to show my own unique perspective on the design and approach to the study, with further details to follow in subsequent chapters.

1.1.6 Gaps in the Literature

Although IA is not a common term in Ireland or the Irish university sector, IA components and discourse are visible in all seven Irish universities. *Why?* Universities in Ireland are almost wholly State-funded, and through the Universities Act 1997 there is a protection of university autonomy. For this study, I wish to

explore the emergence of IA in an Irish university setting, with specific reference to the place of IA as a relationship building tool with alumni.

The Irish university sector has undergone significant change in the last twenty years. Aside from the rise in student participation rates, recent discussions on the commodification of higher education are common in the Irish higher education sector (Bruce 2006; OECD 2004; Skilbeck 2002), marking a resistance to change. The dominant view of managerialism and marketisation in Irish higher education literature is perceived as inherently negative to the sector, bringing what is seen as private sector business and incongruent structures into a university environment (Skilbeck 2001; Lynch 2006). Therefore, I identified a gap in the literature, examining the extent to which IA practice and structures exist in Irish universities as a strategy specifically developed for the sector. Beyond simply asking the *why*, I wanted to critically examine IA as the object of study using the Irish case study as a vehicle of analysis.

I argue that the Irish universities are under pressure to respond to an external higher education environment. As a result, IA practice has emerged, perhaps not in formal name, but in practical action. This situation poses many debates on the role, expectations and autonomy of Irish universities and how this relates to IA practice, which will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters. This is an opportunity to contextualise the motivation for IA practice in an Irish university setting and the impact of this practice on the setting.

IA has emerged in Ireland as mimetic isomorphism (Newman 2001), that is, IA practice in an Irish university replicates IA practice outside of Ireland. Kooiman (2003) describes this as a ‘tendency for likeness’ (p.53), where similar sectors organise themselves and create interactions that are similar, such as a hospital or an

office (Ibid.). While the conditions in Ireland are different and the emergence of IA serves a different purpose than in the North American experience, I argue that IA discourse, practice and interactions have emerged recently in Irish universities to gain external legitimacy from universities worldwide as IA is perceived as a crucial part of a university structure.

Higher education literature concentrates on the organisational side of the institution: on management, administration and governance. Aspects of IA, such as marketing and even fundraising, emerged in the literature in fragmented or selected references as part of a wider debate (Clarke 2008; Rhodes 2001; Marginson and Considine 2000; Clark 1998). Moreover IA practice is often applied in this literature to support the emergence of the university as a corporation, as an enterprise or a business (Marginson and Considine 2000; Lynch 2006). This implication suggests that bringing IA practice into a university environment is the emergence of managerialism or business practices.

This leads to two gaps in the literature. First, there is a gap in academic literature that acknowledges IA as a concept specifically designed for the education sector to bring about growth for the institution. The IA specialist literature is not referenced or debated in wider higher education discourse. There is limited research examining IA for its merits, for its influence on steering the university and for developing the institution through relationships with external but established publics, such as the alumni. Some higher education literature infers that IA work such as marketing and fundraising are borrowed from the private sector, and adapted crudely to fit into a university setting (Newman 2009; Marginson and Considine 2000; Lynch 2006). Even if IA is not approached as foreign to the sector, it forms part of a larger university discourse. For example, fundraising could be a means to raise additional

income during a financial crisis, as opposed to part of a concerted strategy to build relationships with publics.

Second, there is a gap in the literature specific to the Irish and European university context. The aim is not to debate managerialist ideals but to critically engage with the object of study—Institutional Advancement. This study will examine the extent to which the IA exists in an Irish university setting and how it manifests itself as a part of this University is the main object of this study. Studies that examine wide-scale change within the institution discuss individual elements of IA practice, such as fundraising, and not the concerted IA system. For instance, Clark (1998) describes fundraising as ‘third-stream sources’ (p.6) and outlines the fundraising success at the University of Warwick (p.27), while also analysing alumni relations at Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden as a separate university programme (p. 92-93).

Since Clark (1998) applies these examples in what is termed entrepreneurial universities, IA practice in these European institutions is implied as an exception instead of a rule. In this study, I contend that all Irish universities conduct IA activities as do counterparts in the United Kingdom and other European countries as a major focus of a centralised university administration. From my own perspective, especially when I first initiated my research on this topic, I was surprised that literature on management in higher education made little mention to IA practice but, more importantly, made no mention to IA as a concerted strategy or concept.

The focus of this study is the university-alumni interactions and I borrow part of an argument presented by Newman (2005) to illustrate my point. Newman explores the extent to which the commodification of public systems reduces an individual as simply a consumer and not a participant in the system (p.123).

Although I only take the kernel idea from this argument in this study, I wish to explore the role of alumni as active participants in a university system. This role is facilitated through IA practice. As a result there is a transfer of power to the alumni who, with IA support, become working agents whose interactions help in sustaining and in revitalising the institution over the long-term.

To extend this last point, I employ a number of concepts as heuristic devices to allow for greater depth of thinking about the role of IA in building the alumni-university relationship. As a thread running through the thesis, I consider interactive governance as a means to analyse and understand the relationship-building between institution and alumni through Institutional Advancement. Governance often conjures up images of corporate responsibility or steering aspects of the institution, and in this study I consider governance in a broader more relationship-driven way.

Kooiman (2001) describes social-political governance:

...arrangements in which public as well as private actors aim at solving societal problems or create societal opportunities, and aim at the care for societal institutions within which these governing activities take place (p.139).

I will employ an interactive model of governance to unearth relationship building of the University with the alumni, through IA practice as a catalyst. In the analysis chapters, I will describe and relate governance, as a means for ordering interactions and providing an extended and deeper analysis of the empirical data collected from the Irish university case study. Pierre (2001) describes governance as an 'analytical framework' (p.6) and I adopt this principle for my study. It is the interactions between the state, the market and the civil society, described as interactive governance (Kooiman 2003, p.5), that present a good foundation for studying IA as it emerges in an Irish university setting.

1.2 Development of the Study

The IA definitions cast a wide net for relationships with publics: the state, students, alumni, media and the general public. The largest permanent and growing public for a university is alumni—both graduates and former students. In an Irish context, the direct publics for IA practice tend to be those affiliated with the institution because of choice: students and graduates elect to attend the institution to complete studies; staff members decide to work at the institution; companies or organisations enter into a mutually beneficial partnership. The Department of Education & Science (DES) and the mediating State agency the Higher Education Authority (HEA) are also external publics with a statutory responsibility to oversee the sector, while the Irish Universities' Association (IUA) is the university-driven representative body for the seven Irish universities. These agencies play an important role in influencing the emergence of IA in Irish universities.

1.2.1 Summary of Methodology

The methodology is a single case study of an Irish university, to view this IA phenomenon in a manageable and concentrated fashion. I call the case study *Ollscoil*, the Irish word for university. *Ollscoil* serves two functions: First, the case study allows the exploration of IA in an Irish university context, a conduit to examine the nuances of this work; second, the purpose of the case study is to view the impact of IA on the institution, by observing interactive governance in practice *Ollscoil* is not a means to generalise for all Irish universities, nor is it to compare practice between countries. The case study, as outlined in Chapter Two, is the means to test the parameters of IA as a relationship building tool for theory that opens opportunities to do future IA research.

1.2.2 Summary of the Framework for Analysis

Each of the three sections of the study—*input*, *output* and *outcome*—has a separate framework for analysis, combining a critical analysis of IA literature and

interactive governance. To replace a discrete literature review chapter, the IA literature contributes to the design of the framework for analysis. For instance, the division of IA into three key components and the alumni relationship-building cycle are frameworks of my own original design, informed by this IA specialist literature. This study is cumulative in fashion, from *input* of IA in an institution to its *output* and *outcome*. The specialist IA literature is selected and presented to reflect this approach, revealed in detail in each of the *input*, *output* and *outcome* chapters. This strategy allows for the literature to contribute to the understanding the concept of IA better and the illumination of IA through an Irish university case study.

Chapter Three concentrates on *input* to examine the emergence of IA in an Irish university setting. There are four key characteristics of IA that create a framework that I develop through my professional experience and IA literature. I apply these IA characteristics as a lens to view the case study findings in order to show the extent to which IA has taken root in the case study. The Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) is applied as a heuristic device to make sense of the orderings and the emergent interactions of IA in an Irish university through the influences from the higher education sector.

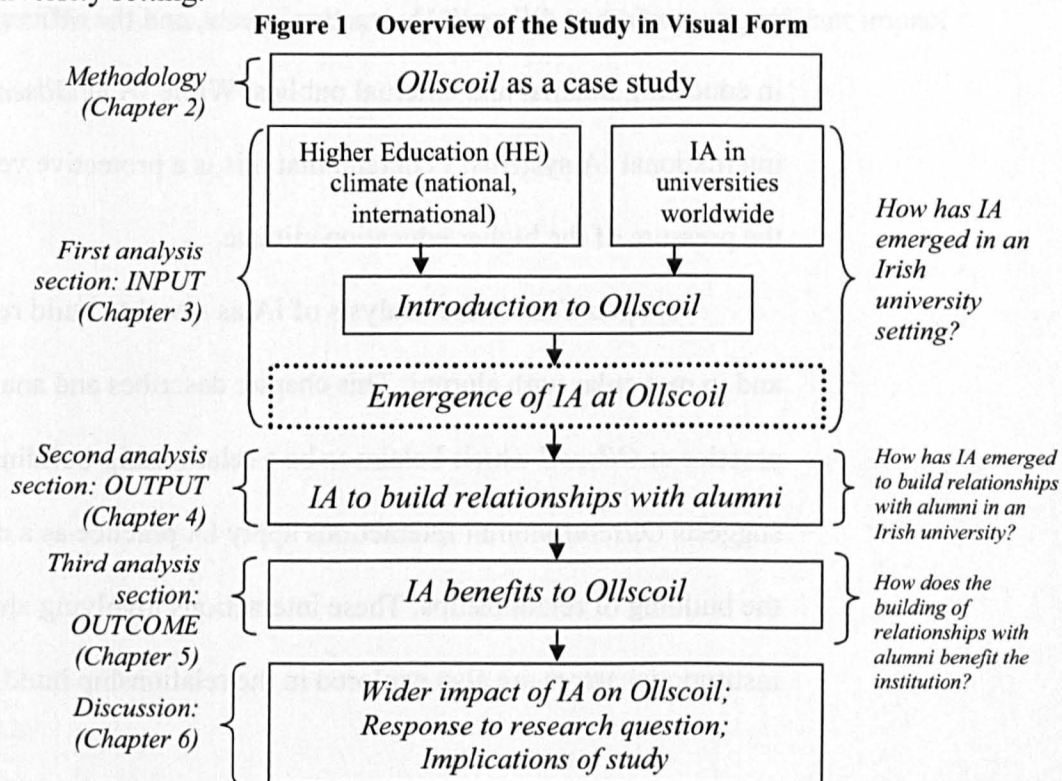
Next, I create a cycle for building relationships with alumni as a framework to study the *output* of IA practice. I use the cycle to analyse the findings and apply interactive governance as a heuristic device to illustrate the interactions and cumulative building of relationships. This framework is extended in the final analysis chapter to consider both the *outcomes* and impact to the institution. Interactive governance looks at the role of the state, society and agencies to coordinate a social system. In this case the social system is *Ollscoil*, where the networking between actors becomes important in this governance process.

Why use interactive governance as a component to analyse case study data?

Interactive governance concentrates on interactions, on solving problems and creating opportunities, and this is a way to examine in building relationships with alumni using IA, or influencing this process through interactions (Kooiman 2001). The idea of a university as a cybernetic system (Hirsch 2001) shows the complexities facing the university, including external demands that are ‘initially intrusive and quickly internalised’ (Ibid., p.133). I contend that the higher education climate has led to IA as one such system in a university which can create change for the institution. This study investigates the influence of IA on shaping interactions with alumni and the potential ripple effect. These ripples are described in interactive governance as first, second and meta-governance, explained in the analysis chapters.

1.3 Summary of Thesis

Figure 1 provides a visual plan of the study, showing the *input-output-outcome* sections of the study building towards this illumination of the role of IA in an Irish university setting:



This diagram attempts to clarify the complexities of this incremental study. The three analysis chapters, the *input*, *output* and *outcome*, are followed by a synthesis of the research, implications of the study and conclusion. To add interest to the study, I present a short vignette from *Ollscoil* at the beginning of each chapter. These vignettes offer the reader a visual image of *Ollscoil* and offer a ‘thick description’ (Stake 2005, p.450) to provide a sense of dimension for the study.

Chapter Two introduces the case study and outlines the methodology, in particular the use of a qualitative interpretive paradigm. This chapter also sets out and justifies the methods used, along with the data collection and analysis.

The next three chapters form the basis of the findings and analysis, divided into the three sections. Each chapter presents a framework to view the case study findings, almost as separate mini-studies. Chapter Three provides a review of IA literature by examining the emergence of IA as a concept in a global context, with an impact from and on the higher education climate. The evidence suggests a significant presence of IA at *Ollscoil*. IA practice is new, and the offices have a significant role in educating internal and external publics. While IA at *Ollscoil* is modelled after international IA systems, I contend that this is a protective veneer developed through the pressure of the higher education climate.

Chapter Four is the analysis of IA as a tool to build relationships with publics and in particular with alumni. This chapter describes and analyses the findings of IA practice at *Ollscoil* which I claim to be a relationship-building tool. The research suggests *Ollscoil*-alumni interactions apply IA practice as a catalyst for structuring the building of relationships. These interactions involving alumni and the institutional actors are also explored in the relationship building cycle.

In Chapter Five I extend this analysis to consider the outcomes from IA as a relationship building tool. I examine the extent to which building relationships is of benefit to *Ollscoil* and how these interactions and relationships with alumni yield a positive outcome and impact for the institution.

Chapter Six pulls the strings of the three analysis chapters together to lead towards a synthesis and discussion which responds to the main research question. I discuss the implications of the study for IA as the object of study and its contribution to the academic community. The thesis concludes with a summary of the analysis and the potential future research emanating from the study.

This study presents an analysis of the emerging concept of IA in an Irish university setting. IA itself is a unique object of study and by naming and analysing the object in the Irish university setting provides an opportunity for wider debate on the place of IA in Irish higher education. IA is under-researched but widely applied in higher education. Although IA is complex, this study attempts to strip down this complexity to view IA as a relationship building tool which has a significant impact on the institution.

In the nature of things, greatness and unity go together; excellence implies a centre. Such, then is a University. It is a seat of great wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of faith, an Alma Mater of the rising generation.

Cardinal Newman 1853 cited McCartney and O'Loughlin 1990, p. 28

Chapter 2 Methodology

Like many Irish universities, *Ollscoil* is nestled in an idyllic setting within the neighbouring city on an leafy and lush expanse of many acres. Established over a century ago, *Ollscoil* combines architecture and aesthetics as varied as its programmes. The slate and stone buildings represent the old tradition with swaying ivy, curved archways and ornamental appeal. Mass expansion is signalled by the utilitarian buildings of the 1960s, cold steel and concrete, faded signs and peeling paint. The more recent additions to the campus bring contemporary design with cathedral ceilings, dramatic angles and glass corridors, creating warm, inviting spaces. Plaques affixed at entrances describe the recent opening of these new buildings and give credit to various State and European funding sources along with support from local development agencies and private donors. The construction sites promise new accommodation for academic units and services. A temporary wooden safety fence is erected around a building site, painted an official University colour.

Ollscoil has grown to ten times its student enrolment in about forty years. During term time, students breathe life into the campus, with the crowded corridors, animated conversations in the canteen, vibrant social activities in the student centre, lounging in the green areas with textbooks, mobile phones and frisbees. This lively atmosphere is contrasted by the quiet corners tucked away in libraries, laboratories and classrooms. Despite the academic formality, the overall atmosphere on campus is

casual; one cannot always distinguish the student from the academic faculty. The campus entrance opens to *Ollscoil*'s oldest building where one finds the University's nerve centre of management and the visitor's reception, a tranquil setting removed from the rest of campus, interrupted periodically by tourists or prospective students.

Beyond a visit to campus, *Ollscoil*'s public face through its communication materials is unflinchingly consistent and follows a strict design code. The publications highlight the University's participation in the local arts and cultural programming; a vibrant student life; noteworthy contributions to research. The case study data suggests that the rhetoric promoting *Ollscoil*'s outstanding student experience and major contribution to the community is not hyperbole. A recent University survey boasted a 91% high satisfaction rate of students citing that they would recommend *Ollscoil* as an ideal place of study (*Ollscoil* Document 1²). The Web site complements the University's image, highlighting accolades and achievements through daily news stories.

The study of *Ollscoil* is the paint used to explore the subject of Institutional Advancement (IA) on the canvas. With my own perspective and background working in IA, the consistency of the University image struck me as I wandered around *Ollscoil*, emerging subtly in the most simple and innocuous locations. I aim to capture these nuances of detail in my research, towards addressing the main research question: *How has Institutional Advancement emerged in an Irish university setting to build relationships with alumni?*

As a researcher, I bring a unique perspective to this study from an outsider's point of view. As stated in the introductory chapter, since I am not working in an Irish university, I wanted to research an area to satisfy my curiosity as to *how* and

² The *Ollscoil* documents referenced in the thesis are gathered from the Irish university case study and listed in Appendix C. Each document is given a number and pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the case study.

why IA emerged in Irish higher education. I decided to adopt a qualitative interpretive methodology for this study. Using this interpretive paradigm, I am engaged in the research case study to ‘explore the meanings of events and phenomena from the subjects’ perspectives’ (Coleman and Briggs 2002, p.18). Thus, a single case study of an Irish university provides a more in-depth analysis and detail than an overview of IA in the entire Irish higher education sector.

2.1 Considering the Methodological Design

My interest in IA was the first motivator towards designing this study. As I accounted for the practical implications of conducting primary research, I decided on a narrower view of IA as an object of study. The relevant IA literature has led me to develop my theoretical framework and thus I arrived at the crux of my research problem: IA activity exists in Irish universities, but it is different to IA in Canada, as I have experienced it. The purpose of identifying this research problem is not to find a solution, but to conduct a study to understand the problem better (Bassey 1999a). My analytical framework mixes IA paradigms with interactive governance. This combination allows me to explore the nature of IA emerging in an Irish university context.

After viewing anecdotal evidence of IA in Irish universities and choosing this as an object of study, I narrowed the scope to examine IA in a single Irish university case study. I collected the primary data from this case study and analysed the findings based on the three sections of the study: the role of IA in the *input*, *output* and *outcome* for the University. Through my data analysis, various themes emerged from the raw data. By reapplying the themes to the data I was able to generate new themes, returning once again to the data, in a cyclical fashion. Once I saturated this process, I adapted these themes to the three broad sections of study that incrementally address the main research question. This brief overview of the process

shows how a complex area such as IA can be broken down into manageable sections in order to analyse IA as an emerging concept in Irish higher education.

2.1.1 Practical Elements of the Study

I designed a small-scale qualitative study, to address the research questions and to make sure that the process was 'doable' (O'Leary 2004, p.93). Due to limited resources and time to complete this study, I decided to choose a single case study of an Irish university. Since I live in rural Ireland, a fair distance from all of the Irish universities, thus I planned my trips to the case study university strategically for maximum impact. Early in the research process, I contacted a senior manager at *Ollscoil* in order to familiarise myself with their process of allowing such case study research to take place. This forward planning offered me ample flexibility when I decided to undertake the case study. I also consulted various sources on gaining access (Wellington et al 2005; Walford 2001; Stake 1999). These sources contributed to my understanding of the necessary procedures to negotiate access and also to consider the type of access required to produce a robust case study. Thus I was able to gain a swift and successful access clearance by management at *Ollscoil*.

Ethical concerns are an important consideration in the research design and implementation of the study. The research plan received ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee, School of Education at the University of Sheffield in autumn 2008. I understand that information on both governance and IA, fundraising in particular, is best approached with diplomacy and tact. Moreover, to minimise any sensitivities by respondents, the case study university is anonymous. Every effort is made to ensure the *Ollscoil* cannot be identified and in some instances non-essential details such as job titles or office names, are changed to protect this anonymity. With only seven universities in Ireland, anonymity enables participants to feel comfortable in speaking candidly about the University. As a researcher it allowed me to collect

data, and be critical without concerns of repercussions for the institution along with protection for the participants (Walford 2001).

As outlined above, to plan a methodological design, I used the starting points outlined by O’Leary (2004): the research question; the right ‘fit’ for the researcher, such as the skills, roles and interests; the capacity to complete the research, including ethical approval, consideration for resources, time and access (p.91-95). The methodological design also included choosing the methodology, methods, techniques and tools used for this research in order to cover the *how* aspect of the study.

When considering the scale of the study, I narrowed the IA external publics to alumni, primarily defined as former students and graduates.³ Alumni are the largest and the only permanent public for a university. Alumni are often the forgotten or neglected public, especially in my experience of Irish universities, with the emphasis given to the prospective student, the student experience, and community outreach; alumni often become a lesser priority (L. Gately, 2009, personal communication, May 21). This study illustrates the dynamic role of alumni at *Ollscoil* and the impact of this alumni-*Ollscoil* relationship for the institution.

2.1.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Reflexivity is an important component of this study. While my experience brings a unique perspective to this study, I am also conscious of my ontological and epistemological assumptions that impact the study. My original ontological assumptions would have seen IA as a given at a university, as my understanding of the concept in a North American context is as an embedded aspect of a university system. This assumption also extends to my understanding of how university personnel along with students know about IA practice, in particular linkages between a university and alumni. However, for this study in the Irish university context, I

³ In some cases, I employ the term alumni and graduates interchangeably.

changed my perception of reality and I am open to interpretation of IA within a different context, understanding that others involved in this study do not take IA as a taken for granted assumption.

My interpretation of what is knowledge for this study, or my epistemological assumptions, are also rooted in my IA work. Therefore, by using qualitative methods and an interpretive methodology for the case study, I wish to explore IA as it is socially constructed within the case study university and ‘...use methods that engage with, talk to and question and explore the experiences of the people involved’ (Wellington et al 2005, p.102). With IA as a fairly unknown term in Ireland, a positivist approach to the study would have collected quantitative data and would have been rooted in a different reality of *what is IA*, with minimal ways of exploring these nuances of difference. Moreover, Stark and Torrance (2005) emphasise the importance of ensuring that the boundaries of knowledge are clear. In this instance, I remained reflexive, monitoring that the parameters of knowledge were sufficiently understood to avoid a blurring of boundaries, especially for concepts new to the sector. By adopting a subjective and inductive methodology, I generate a richness of data for interpretation and analysis.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) ask the question: ‘what is the relationship between the knower and the would-be known?’ (cited Mertens 2005, p.8), which I consider in constructing the framework for analysis in this study. As the ‘knower,’ my background in IA is crucial to *how* I interpret the literature in developing IA paradigms for a workable theoretical framework. The “would be known” is recognising the link between this constructed paradigm and the research data. An Irish university case study allows me to put distance between myself and the data. Moreover, by adding the dimension of interactive governance, the interpretation of

the IA phenomenon paradigm is not reactive, providing some analytical distance between myself and the case study data.

2.2 Case Study Rationale and Design

This is a single case study design of an Irish university. Aside from the limitations of scope for study in terms of time and logistics, a single case provides what Yin (1994) describes as 'a critical case' (p.38) and an opportunity to '...confirm, challenge or extend the theory' (Ibid). Due to my unique position in approaching this study, the exploring and the building of the theory on IA thus provides: 'help to refocus future investigation in an entire field' (Yin 1994, p.39). *Ollscoil* is designed as an exploratory case study as defined by Yin (1994) and Bassey (1999a), that is, IA is the main subject of the research and the single university case study is the vehicle to an in-depth investigation of this subject. Stake (1995) describes this as an instrumental case study: 'This use of case study is to understand something else' (p.3).

Ollscoil as a single case study allows for the object of study to be considered within the contextual conditions (Yin 1994) of this Irish university. IA within a university is a complex phenomenon. To view and demonstrate this complexity is to analyse IA through its interactions with these conditions and not in isolation. *Ollscoil* is a unique case; to generalise across the Irish university sector or indeed towards institutions engaging in IA practice is not the intention of this study. This case study is a means to examine the research problem in further depth leading to 'thick description' (Stake 2005, p.450). As Irish universities enter a period of transition (Coate and Mac Labhrainn 2009), I would like to underline that this case study is a snapshot of *Ollscoil* in a fixed period of time, over an eight-month period between the last half of 2008 and early 2009.

The focus of this case study is the impact of building relationships with alumni for the institution's benefit. Alumni and even students may also yield benefit from these relationships emanating from IA activity and my study focuses on how these relationships are organised from the University's perspective and for the University's benefit. I am aware that putting such parameters on my case study poses epistemological issues by putting a limitation on what is knowledge (Stark and Torrance 2005). However, I am examining the relationships from the institutional point of view and not evaluating the effectiveness of IA practice or the perception of the alumni towards these relationships. I analyse the relationships as they are presented, observed and interpreted.

2.2.1 Choosing a Case Study

There are over forty higher education institutions in Ireland, but my interest for this study is the university sector, despite the fact that the Institutes of Technology, private and university colleges are also active in IA practise. I chose *Ollscoil* for this case study as it afforded me the greatest amount of access. With my ethical clearance secured, a senior manager at *Ollscoil* granted me access to approach staff, students and alumni for research purposes. Individuals still had the option not to participate in the research, as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet in Appendix A, but I found individuals to be most accommodating throughout this process. I also gained access to *Ollscoil* public documents, including archival public documents. *Ollscoil* also allowed me to conduct observation on campus in a *fly-on-the-wall* fashion. The open level of access at *Ollscoil* and the time available made the process easy and enjoyable.

2.3 Selecting Methods

Observation, documentary analysis and interviews are noted as the most common methods used for case studies (Stark and Torrance 2005). The purpose for

choosing these three methods is beyond reasons of popularity. I selected these methods because I felt that they would enable me to collect data that best addressed the research question and problem.

2.3.1 Choosing Observation as a Method

With my experience of IA, I chose observation because I hoped to find explicit examples of IA in practice— on campus and by attending *Ollscoil* events as an observer. I recorded in my field notes examples of IA as a relationship building tool. I approached observation as an insider-outsider—insider to IA and outsider to the institution—so I identified IA as I understood it, without someone telling me about it, through interviews or documents.

I kept my observation natural and unstructured (Bassey 1999b). The observations allowed me to become familiar with *Ollscoil* and develop intimacy with the institution. The description of unstructured observation by Jones and Somekh (2005) sums up my approach: ‘the researcher is guided by prior knowledge and experience and “sees” through the unique lens of her own socio-culturally constructed values depending upon life history and factors such as gender, ethnicity, social class and disciplinary and professional background’ (p.140). Since my object of study related more with the organisational structure of the institution, the individual relationships between University actors and alumni or academic staff members and students are part of a greater whole. In this study I remain reflexive, considering my own position to this research. I chose observation, because I saw it as a way to observe what would be absent in interview contact and documentary evidence—my opportunity for my field notes to record the observation as ‘intuition’ (Wellington 2000, p. 94).

2.3.2 Choosing Documentary Analysis as a Method

To complement the empirical data collected through the observation field notes and interview transcripts, I sought documentary analysis as an important complementary method for collecting data. I wanted to focus on data that would illuminate the University as a case study, so chose to collect internal *Ollscoil* documents, from alumni magazines to student handbooks, annual reports to governance documents. It is my experience that IA practice is visible at a university from its documents and this allowed me to gather information relying on my own investigative skills rather than referrals from interviews.

Because of the limited number of interviews, documents allowed me to gain a more thorough insight into the perspective and official position of other university stakeholders not interviewed, such as the *Ollscoil* President, in *Ollscoil* publications. By collecting and analysing the documents as a researcher, I viewed the documents through the lens of the analytical framework and in the context of the research questions. Some historical and archived documents show the evolution of IA in print and the potential to analyse discourse.

2.3.3 Choosing Interviews as a Method

When first deciding to study IA in an Irish university setting, my first instinct was to interview those working directly in IA within the case study setting. Through my research into IA and preliminary case study research, I expanded the initial list to include other key actors impacted by IA: senior management, alumni, students, administrative and academic staff. Finally, as I narrowed my field of study to examine IA as it benefits the institution, I settled on interviews that fell into three categories: stakeholders of IA, strategic administrators and IA administrators, discussed in detail in the next section.

Semi-structured interviews afforded me the flexibility to probe complex issues and steer the conversation, balanced by still allowing the participant to be candid. Wellington (2000) describes interviewing as 'the unobservable' (p.71) that is, the opinions and perspectives of an individual at a particular time in a particular context. Choosing to interview key individuals allowed me to delve deep into IA, and gather data that otherwise would not be uncovered. This is especially true since I expected that it would be unlikely that data on IA and building relationships for my study would be explicitly available. Interviewing as a method allowed me to probe the data collection into the direction of my research.

2.4 Reflecting on, Evaluating and Justifying Methods

During the course of my EdD study, I kept a research diary or 'learning journal' (Wellington et al 2005, p. 35), which I used initially to clarify my thoughts, ideas, references and personal experiences related to the study. As I moved into the fieldwork of this study, I used the research diary to reflect on my methods, as Altrichter and Holly (2005) suggest, to supplement my field notes and interview transcripts. An excerpt from my research diary is included in Appendix I. During the interpretation stage, I used my research diary to remind myself of my own frame of mind and feelings during the data collection. In this section, I present a reflection on each of the methods chosen, including detail on how I conducted the fieldwork.

To reflect on my methods, I referred to a list from Wellington (2000) that includes items such as: the quality of the data collected; the breadth of data; some of the limitations of the method as well as my limitations in enacting the method for this study. Issues, such as my position as researcher and the methods, were already addressed earlier in this chapter.

To evaluate the methods, I consider the effectiveness in the field to yield valuable data along with the limitations of the method. Justifying methods extends

the reflection and evaluation to answer the question: *why this method and not another?* The three methods chosen proved to be a sound way for my context to conduct the study, gather appropriate data and explore the research questions.

2.4.1 Observation: Reflection, Evaluation and Justification

Between July and December 2008, I visited *Ollscoil* campus eight times to conduct observation sessions along with an additional virtual visit to the University through the *Ollscoil* Web site. The visits were purposeful, to focus on certain parts of the institution or planned to coincide with campus events, such as attending the graduation ceremony. My intention was to get a sense of the physical space: what does it say to an outsider? What does it say to inside or outside publics? I recorded in my field notes the factual information of what I saw, and also what I 'sensed' (Gay 1996, p.221) about the environment and interactions as I viewed them. In total, I conducted sixteen hours of observation, coded as FN (Field Note) FN-01 through FN-09. A full listing of the themes of the visits is in Appendix B and an excerpt from the Field Notes is available in Appendix H.

As I noted earlier, I did not confine my analysis of relationships through IA to those that occur on the physical campus. Much of the relationship building and interaction occur at off-campus University events, including those organised by the IA offices at *Ollscoil*. I decided not to attend these events for a number of reasons. First, for practical and logistical reasons, including timing and geography I could not physically attend these events. Second, I considered that in attending these events I would be an obvious outsider, not present to participate at the reunion or event but to conduct research. Thus I felt that it would be unethical for me to be present without those attending not knowing the real reason for my presence. My interview of an alumni representative on the Governing Authority noted a similar quandary: 'I stopped going to the alumni reunions. People want to meet with their class, they only

want to talk to each other: that's what it is about' (Interview- AGA-ID8, 4). The purpose of the observation is to gather a sense of the environment, to obtain 'naturally occurring data' (Silverman 2005, p.120) providing me with illuminations and creativity to approach the study. This is a way of minimising 'observer effect' (Gay 1996, p.222), that is, to minimise my impact on the data collected.

I view observation as an introductory method for my study, opening ideas and doors of inquiry in order to view subtle or perhaps not so subtle examples of IA practice on the *Ollscoil* campus. My field note observations include an account of campus activity and are static, reflecting my feelings as I recorded them (Silverman 2005). I use my own research diary as a tool to reflect on my feelings of a particular observation day and provide additional thoughts since reading the notes, to allow me to explore the subject more thoroughly. The vignettes at the beginning of each chapter are adapted initially from observation, complemented by the document analysis and interviews, to give the reader what Stake (1999) describes as 'vicarious experiences' (p.63) in order to get a feeling of the atmosphere at *Ollscoil*.

Conducting observation at *Ollscoil* allowed me to become more intimate with the University's surroundings and its atmosphere. Observation proved to be a powerful method to understand the University environment, as Walford (2001) describes: 'most research is actually interested in what people do than what they say they do' (p.85). By taking a "just looking" perspective (Simpson and Tuson 1995) I wanted to keep the observation unstructured and on the whole unscheduled. I did however attend certain events as an observer and I found this to be a useful way of watching events from a distance and from a different perspective. After years of working in a university environment where I would be totally involved, such as

conferring ceremonies, to step away and become a mere observer was an exercise in 'making the familiar strange' (Ibid., p.4).

The justification for this particular method is a means to gather evidence without the interference of the researcher, thus preserving the validity and reliability for the study. This brings richness to the data as it includes a wide variety of observations, recorded through detailed field notes. I found this method served me well in viewing, even on the surface, some of the nuances of the internal relationships at play, while also considering how IA appears on campus in practice: what does IA look like from a distance? What is being viewed by those visiting the campus? The visual elements of IA are also evident through observation and my background in IA allowed me to see things and reflect on IA activity happening on campus.

2.4.2 Documentary Analysis: Reflection, Evaluation and Justification

As part of the process, I gathered and analysed a number of University documents including: annual reports, policy documents, strategic plans, promotional materials, University Foundation documentation, internal newsletters, alumni magazines and other relevant published documents. My references also included policy documents and Irish Government publications in the documentary analysis as they were relevant in illuminating the context of the case study, such as the Universities Act 1997. During interviews, some participants also provided me with internal University documents, such as governance structures, that I included, with permission, as part of my analysis. All documents were logged and coded according to whether they were published or unpublished materials and the type of resource (e.g. video, published report) along with whether the document had open public or restricted internal access. I used Wellington (2000) as a typology to reflect on this level of access for coding purposes and later for analysis.

In most cases, the documents collected for the case study were produced within the University. In addition, I also found a few relevant outside sources which pertained to *Ollscoil*. I included these sources in my analysis after careful consideration, making sure *Ollscoil*'s anonymity would be protected. I collected over eighty documents and a list of these *Ollscoil* documents with pseudonyms is listed in Appendix C.

While the documents offered a wide picture of *Ollscoil*, the documents tended to be internally controlled by the institution. In general, the document would portray the institution in a positive light and be geared for a certain target audience. As with the observations, I gathered documents on the University over an eight-month period, between July 2008 and February 2009. This also brought a time-bound element to my study, so the case does reflect the University at a particular point in time. The documents collected were not necessarily produced during this time period, but, on the whole, they represented current and relevant information that portrayed a picture of the University environment. By collecting this data early on in the process, I identified key individuals that I wished to approach for an interview.

To analyse the documents collected, I used a simple approach derived from Scott (1990) examining the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of all documents (p.6-8). Due to the number of documents collected, including Web-accessed resources, I also employed an interpretative approach to analysis by considering the document in context, including the reference, presupposition, implications and inference of the text as outlined in Brown and Yule (2006). These elements helped to locate the documents in the field and ensured the theme coding of the document during the analysis was applicable to the study.

The *Ollscoil* documents revealed so much about the institution, especially the visual *at first glance* aspect of the materials. Documents over time allowed me to view the object of study in an evolutionary way, a 'within method triangulation' (Stake 1999, p.107; Wellington 2000, p.24). Moreover, the documents also provided 'between method triangulation' (Ibid.), whereby different types of documents were used to form an analysis on the object of study. To get a full view of *Ollscoil* as a case, documents show a carefully selected official, published view of the institution, with its values and ethos. The formality of these documents provided a solid grounding for analysing discourse and an understanding of governance structures and systems, especially as it pertains to IA as an object of study.

2.4.3 Interviews: Reflection, Evaluation and Justification

I conducted eight interviews with various internal and external stakeholders, varying from forty-five to ninety minutes in length. My interviews fit broadly into three categories and a list of interviews with this categorisation is available in Appendix D. The first category includes the key IA stakeholders: students and alumni. I selected the Students' Union President as a representative of the student body and an alumni representative on the *Ollscoil* Governing Authority as interviewees because of their participation in the University's strategy and governance.⁴ The purpose of these interviews is not to gain the interviewees' personal perspective on IA-related activity; instead I designed the interview questions to yield a particular perspective on the impact of IA on the entire student/alumni cohort by those engaged in the wider University governance context.

The second category is the strategic administrators, the managers with a key role in shaping policy emanating from the decisions of the governing body. I

⁴ The Students' Union President is also a member of the Governing Authority, along with acting as a student representative on a number of administrative and management committees of *Ollscoil*.

specifically chose the following senior managers: the University Secretary as the key individual responsible for servicing the Governing Authority and advising on the academic matters at *Ollscoil*; the Administrator in the Office of the President who coordinates and monitors *Ollscoil* strategic planning; and the Outreach Manager responsible for the implementation of the civic engagement and service learning policy identified in the University Strategic Plan as fundamental to the institution's ethos. As the key individuals involved in the advancement of institution, but not directly involved in what is defined as institutional advancement, the purpose of these interviews is to gain insight into the links between the emergence of IA practice and the implementation of *Ollscoil* strategy.

The final category is the *Ollscoil* IA staff, specifically the managers from the three IA offices: the Director of Development who manages the University Foundation, the Communications and Marketing Manager and the Manager of Alumni Affairs. I concentrated on the management level of each of these offices in order to gain the strategic perspective of IA at *Ollscoil*. Other staff within the IA offices may have offered further information into IA activity, however the intention of these interviews is to probe deeper into these IA mechanics, which I observed in my campus visits and noted in *Ollscoil* documentation, in building relationships with alumni and towards *Ollscoil* advancement.

To ensure acquiring data that was useful to the study, I designed semi-structured interviews. I prepared, at maximum, six questions per interviewee. Appendix G provides a sample of questions asked from one of the interviews. As a semi-structured interview, the answers stimulated me to ask more probing or follow-up questions. During this process I was mindful of Kvale (1996) who states how interviews can be both formal and informal at the same time: 'An interview is a

conversation that has a structure and a purpose' (p.6). I also found that once I asked questions using IA discourse, it revealed my background in IA to the interviewee and I noted a marked increase in the use of internal IA discourse during my interviews with IA office personnel.

All interviews were digitally recorded and I transcribed all interviews in full for analysis. Appendix J provides an excerpt from an interview transcript. I found the transcription process to be useful as it brought the interview back to me and I created notes or research diary entries regarding my experience in the interview. Moreover, following each interview, I wrote a reflection on the interview in my research diary, including what could be improved and generally what I hoped to get from the interview. Some of my reflections included: 'I found it difficult to ask follow-up questions because there was little let-up in the interviewee talking...' (Gallo 2008, December 6) and 'The interviewee was familiar with IA straight off and the links between IA and the rest of the University' (Ibid, December 15).

More interviews may have been beneficial to acquire more data. I found that the confines of time and especially the amount of data already generated made this unfeasible. In the course of my interviews, I discovered many of the interviewees represented more than one "public" than originally intended. For instance, a staff member interviewed was also an alumnus of *Ollscoil*. In these cases, I tried to focus on the original purpose of the interview to probe the intended questions in the title or original "public" role. I also realised that their other identity contributed to the response, especially in the context of how the interviewee ended up engaged in a lifelong relationship with the University, drawing on their own experiences as students, as alumnus and their current role at *Ollscoil*.

The interviews proved to be a wealth of data for my study. With a limited amount of concerted IA resources within the setting, and indeed in the Irish university sector, interviews allowed me to focus the discussion on IA and its role at the University. Interviews also enabled me to probe specific aspects of the research questions and information that I observed or viewed on IA in print. Since my other two methods are unobtrusive, getting a sense of the institution directly from *Ollscoil* actors enhanced the perspective and analysis of other data collected. I also found that interviewing made me reflect on my own values and assumptions of IA and building relationships, therefore I was more careful in the words that I chose for prepared questions, for follow-up questions and for terminology employed.

2.4.4 Validity and Triangulation of Methods

The wide variety of research methods enabled me to see the same themes emerge from different sources and thus allowed me to gain a greater understanding of IA within a complex institution like a university. The vignettes and examples in my analysis were selected as they arose from data collected from these different methods and, hopefully, provide clarity towards generating themes to address the object of study. Denzin (1970) reinforces the use of triangulation for qualitative data describing it as 'when different methods are used in relation to the same object of study' (cited Wellington 2000, p.24). As a qualitative study, the three methods were employed as a means of 'using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning' (Stake 2005, p. 453). The findings made reference to the same events, observations, phrases and even terms duplicated from a variety of sources as they were gathered using different methods.

In designing my study, I made every attempt to minimise threats to validity (Silverman 2005), by paying attention to the organisation of the research design, and choosing the methods that best addressed the study. I used the triangulation of

methods as a means to develop themes. The validation of data through the exploration of observational methods and interviews illuminated my data and even a formed the basis for preliminary analysis.

This case study is not a means of creating generalisations of IA and the building alumni relationships in Irish universities, but it is simply a means of generating interest in and illuminating the research problem. The case study should be taken independently as an interesting study. Depending on the appropriate resources, the framework developed for this object of study may be investigated, expanded and generalised across the Irish universities in a larger study. Bassey (1999a) argues for 'fuzzy generalisations' (p.12) for a single case study. This would create the potential for the research if a larger study were to be undertaken.

To ensure accuracy of my data, I created a summary of the main points of the interview to send to the interviewees for verification.⁵ To preserve validity as much as possible in this summary, I used exact quotations from the interview with phrases or aspects of the interview that were most relevant to the study in order to confirm accuracy. After all the transcripts were collated, I read through all of them, jotting down notes in the right-hand column. Next, I assembled themes and then considered these themes against the research questions. Where necessary I streamlined these themes as outlined in further detail in the next section.

2.5 Data Analysis

With the observation field notes, interview transcripts and document summaries, the research generated a large quantity of raw data. I managed the large quantity of data by following a data analysis that combines the stages outlined by

⁵ I offered to send the full transcript, but in every case interviewees were satisfied to receive a summary of key points (bullet points of about one page) to confirm the data.

Wellington (2000) and Bassey (1999a) on analysing qualitative data, along with techniques that share similarities with elements of grounded theory.

2.5.1 Stages of Data Analysis

First, I spent time immersed in my data, reviewing notes and transcripts sequentially to get a full sense of what I had collected. In my research diary, I describe this process as: ‘...almost overwhelming because of the amount of data I had produced’ (Gallo 2009, January 14). This allowed me to understand and get a feel for the data and indeed the case study university. I took notes, highlighted sections of interest and summarised ideas on wide margins. At this stage Wellington (2000) discusses a point of standing back from the data, and I found that the intimacy of the data was perhaps getting too familiar. As I wanted to remain objective and focused on the study, one morning I moved away from the data by simply starting to generate themes and rereading the data in light of these themes, making notes and adding new sub-themes as I read. I then reviewed all the data with the themes in mind and counted the number of times a theme emerged and its relevance to my study (Gallo, 2009, January 6). These themes were distilled in, what Bassey (1999a) calls ‘generating and testing analytical statements’ (p.70). I arranged each theme into separate sections: A, B, C and D, then into sub-themes, A1, A2 A3 and so on. Creating this coding system allowed me to connect segments of data to themes. I returned to the raw data and recoded all the data to reflect these sections, analytical statements and themes by coding them in an Excel worksheet. The worksheet was designed to arrange the themes and sub-themes vertically and the data sets (i.e. the individual interviews, field notes) horizontally. A summary of my initial themes is included in Appendix E. Transcripts, for instance, were broken into small sections and coded in order that I could return to the original source if I needed further

information. This process would also ensure that I would remain true to the original data and not take statements out of context.

By examining the data through a developed IA framework I was able to generate a variety of themes. I note that my data analysis draws on some elements of grounded theory. Silverman (2005) summarises grounded theory as an evolution of categorisation: ‘the development and populating of categories as they arise during observation, then analysing the clustered material to a relevant conclusion’ (p.71). Initially this analysis was an exercise in open coding, that Strauss (2003) explains as deriving concepts from the data unconditionally and openly to be analysed under certain parameters afterwards— like getting everything, or every concept, on paper and then honing the analysis at a later stage.

At this stage, I realised that the size of this study required further culling of categories (Tesch 1990 cited Wellington 2000, p.150), in order to merge themes and sub-themes under broad headings directly relevant to the study. This synthesis of themes became an organic process and as new ideas emerged, the themes would be altered to reflect a new sequence of the category or theme. The fragmentation of the analysis needed to be re-joined together to respond to the aims and objectives of the study along with addressing the research question. The *input, output* and *outcome* nature of IA was a prominent theme that emerged from the data that I then adopted for the main themes of each of the analysis chapters. I found it useful to examine how the themes fit under the main *input, output* and *outcome* themes and how they contribute to the development of the framework for analysis for each section.

This stage allowed me to reflect again on the data analysis. I wondered whether I had collected the right variety and amount of data. I soon realised that the narrow scope of the study and the amount of data, categorised into themes, was

indeed sufficient to explore the research question. The framework for analysis, consisting of IA paradigms combined with interactive governance, was a crucial tool in the interpretation of the data. The framework in each chapter is a lens that examines and deconstructs each section of data: the emergence of IA (*input*); IA as a relationship building tool (*output*); and benefit and value of alumni relationships to the institution (*outcome*).

2.5.2 Analysis of Data Collected with Different Methods

I present both a reflective and reflexive account of how the data was analysed under each research method. The field notes provided my own observation of the visits to the *Ollscoil* campus. Since the study was about building relationships, the observational data provided the overview of the physical environment and the image the University portrays to the public. My analysis of my field notes tended to focus on viewing IA as it manifested itself on campus, such as branded signage. I used my observations as a supplementary measure to the wider analysis, allowing an objective view of IA on campus, through my eye focusing on the minute details of this practice. While I have visited all seven Irish universities, it is beyond the scope of this study to compare the environment of *Ollscoil* with the others. I was conscious to take what I saw and record it at face value. In the categorisation, analysis and synthesis stage, I then could unpick these field notes to complement other data findings.

To analyse *Ollscoil* documents, I paid close attention to the language, both the discourse of IA, along with the repetition of phrases and terms. I also made comments on the visual appearance of the documents themselves, and how I came across the documents, as I felt it was relevant to the study. When Hodder (2003) warns of the potential for bias in the selection and analysis of documents as a data source, I concentrated my analysis to a series of questions including the audience,

aim, political and social context, dissemination, author and visual impact. Since I collected such a breadth of documents, I considered their direct relationship to IA and contribution to the study. Again, I tried to avoid a comparison of my knowledge of similar documents across other Irish universities and focused on the *Ollscoil* context. The documents proved to be a revealing source of analysis, providing information across all themes, usually complementing events or initiatives noted in interviews. The perspective on University events was of notable importance when analysing the data derived from documents.

In my preliminary analysis of interview data, I noted in my research diary that as a researcher from outside of Ireland, many interviewees began their interviews with an overview of the Irish higher education system, which besides taking up precious time, was not always helpful except perhaps to understand the perspective of the individual towards the higher education sector (Gallo 2008, December 18). I observed both carefully constructed responses to my questions, and also spontaneous responses (Wellington 2000), and I tried not to lead the interview except to ensure it was related to the object of study. Since I generated full transcripts of the interviews, I treated this information for analysis as I did all other written data, noting the techniques for analysis above.

Strauss (2003) refers to the richness of a variety of sources in the collection and coding of data for analysis with ‘...different kinds of data give different views or vantage points’ (p.27). For this study I identified categories and compared different events and observations from the data to different aspects of the analysis, as they related to the *input*, *output* or *outcome* sections as they evolved. With little formal IA theory available, a systematic approach to data analysis allowed ideas and theories to rise to the surface through a creative analysis of observations, document analysis and

interviews. This proved to be a most effective way to generate an analysis and to have authentic and relevant themes for the data analysis.

2.5.3 Presentation of Data Analysis

The presentation of the data analysis is in three concerted sections: *input*, *output* and *outcome*. This allows for a sequential and systematic way of interpreting and analysing data. As a complicated topic, I broke the analysis into three sections, with each section contributing in its own right to the main research question. When completing the process, I likened it to three separate research projects, sewn together at the end by the ultimate main research question (Gallo 2009, February 22). During the analysis phase, I did find the process frustrating because the first two chapters really set the scene for the rest of the analysis. In another context, the input section would have been the taken for granted assumption, that is, the assertion of IA as part of the Irish university system, which is not the case. This research clarifies the *how* and the *why* IA has emerged in an Irish university setting and its impact of building relationships with alumni. The variety of data sources to justify the case study at *Ollscoil* proved to be sufficient in generalising about the specific case.

2.6 Summary

This chapter shows the research methodology, and provides a reflection on how I constructed the study and an analysis of the rigour of its design. From my original lofty aspirations of a wide study, the research was honed towards the creation of a concentrated study. Although focused, the case study of *Ollscoil* is interesting in itself as a means to examine wider themes. The next three chapters present the findings of the study, forming the foundation for the analysis and arguments on IA and building relationships with alumni in the Irish university setting, using various tools of the theoretical framework to elicit a proper analysis and response to the research questions.

I designed the structure of this thesis to follow a logical but incremental fashion in order to slowly build the study. Each of the next three chapters begins with a background of IA in context and a framework in which to view and analyse IA in the field. The findings are then presented, followed by an analysis through the framework lens. Again, this design provides a consistent flow and responds to the main research question and to the minor questions along the way. This process brings the theoretical aspects of the research closer to a practical case. Since IA at *Ollscoil* represents a new concept and new ideas, I would like to seize the opportunity to peel back each layer of the analysis towards a core set of ideas on IA in an Irish university setting.

Advancement has a rather subtle connotation of forward motion or of movement to a better position or a new beginning. It implies a mindset, a global view, a comprehensive approach to change and betterment.

Muller 1986, p.xvi

Chapter 3 Input: The Emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*

Dotted throughout *Ollscoil* are parking lots, gardens, sculptures and footpaths designed around the local natural amenities. *Ollscoil* signage, with the University logo, font and colours, sews the campus together, a uniformity that spills onto notice boards, etched glass doors and campus maintenance vehicles. Inside, the older buildings battle with this consistency, revealing the old *Ollscoil* crest and colours.

A virtual stroll through the *Ollscoil* Web site offers a similar image of the institution. The University news items are front-and-centre on the home page surrounded by the *Ollscoil* logo, standardised design and slogan of the institution. The *Ollscoil* news stories range from the recent appointment of senior academic faculty, to campus events; from celebrations of a major research achievement to community outreach initiatives. Most headlines start with the word '*Ollscoil....*,' putting the name of the University to the forefront while the accompanying photos focus on people posing around the campus. One story promotes a new academic programme, unique to *Ollscoil*, emanating from the demand in Ireland for a particular field of study. Another news item reports on a successful arts and culture initiative, marrying a community event with an exhibition in the University's art gallery. Yet another news item shows students as volunteers to support the University's claim to a holistic approach to learning outside the classroom.

Navigating through the *Ollscoil* Web site includes a section called *Alumni & Friends* and another the *Ollscoil University Foundation*, which opens a plethora of initiatives, records of past reunions, invitations to future events, numerous opportunities for philanthropy. These Web sites are designed specifically to appeal directly to alumni: ‘help us find lost alumni friends...’ is one request; ‘I would greatly appreciate your support for this project...’ is another (Field Notes-03, 3). The repeated use of “we” and “us” implies that the alumni reader and the University are part of the same community, a close family that requires mutual support.

The communication and promotional materials alone show significant evidence of the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*, that is modelled after international IA practice. From the main research question, *how has Institutional Advancement emerged in an Irish university setting as a relationship building tool with alumni?*, this chapter concentrates on the higher education conditions leading to the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil* and the extent of this practice. IA is examined in a global context, with particular reference to its American origins. Next, I outline the characteristics of IA in relation to its connection to the institution, which forms a framework for analysis. After presenting the Irish higher educational conditions in Ireland, I examine the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*, with an analysis of IA characteristics within the institution. I argue that *Ollscoil* is the midst of establishing the IA systems and ethos across the institution. The emergence of IA enables *Ollscoil* to steer the response to the higher education climate and proactively consider the market in order to allow the University to advance its vision and its aims and objectives, resulting in it acquiring greater autonomy from the State.

3.1 IA and the Global Context

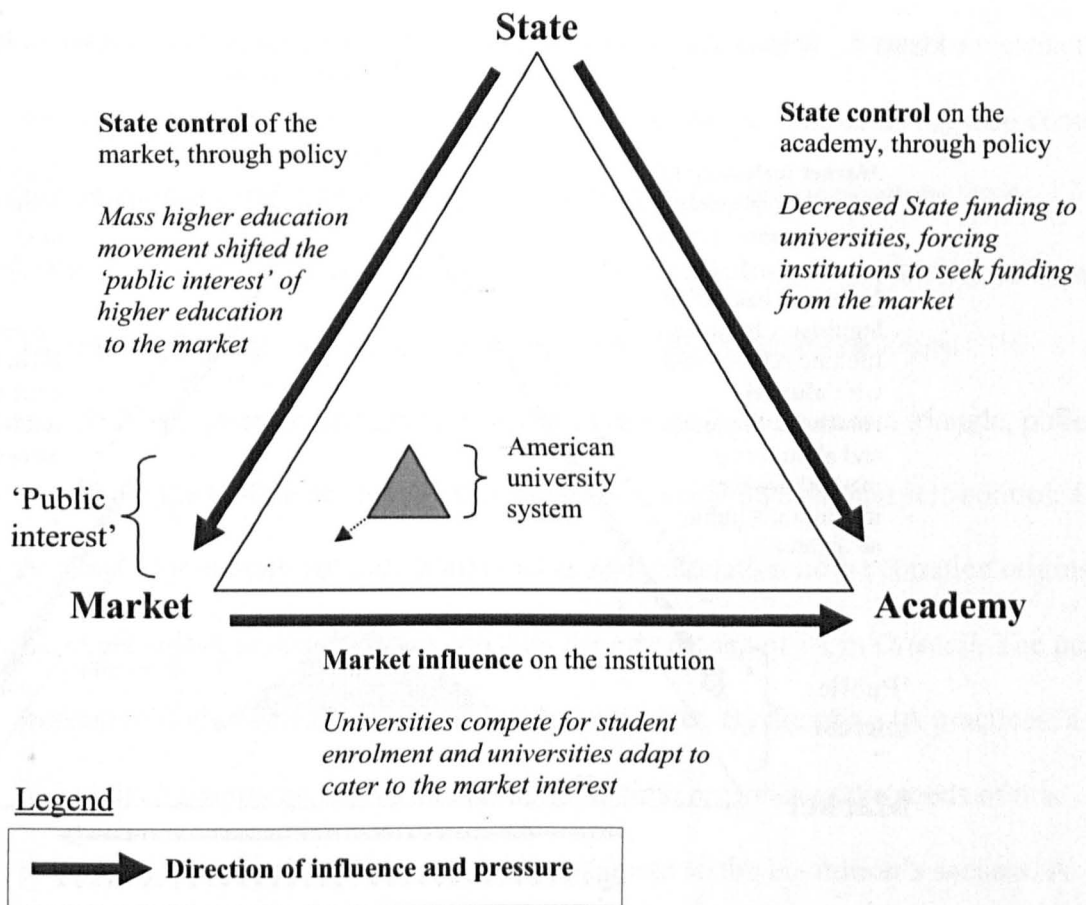
Higher education in the United States is a public responsibility, that is, the onus is on the public at large to support the system (Tromble 1998), restricting

'government to being a regulator, rather than principal executor, of the public interest' (Muller 1986, p.1). The mass higher education movement described by Trow (1973) changed the university landscape from elite enrolment to rapid expansion, offering students a wide choice, thus creating a market-driven environment. Additional funding was required to address the practical needs of expansion and to differentiate institutions in a competitive market. Universities continue to view other institutions as competitors—for students, academic staff, for funding and research prowess (Muller 1986). Worth (1993) notes that the competitive environment in American higher education is taken for granted and described as the catalyst towards the establishment of formal IA organisational structures and practice (Rowland 1986; Worth 1993). As government support of higher education decreased, making a case for a university through IA practice increased (Ibid.). The American university became increasingly dependent on tuition fees paid by students and donations from alumni in order to operate, especially resonant in the competitive private university sector (Palfreyman 2004). Universities emerged as the masters of their own destiny, with IA as the conduit to secure this destiny through the support of external publics—including alumni.

The American higher education system is complex and this study presents a small part of the debate as it pertains to IA practice. I employ the Triangle of Coordination developed by Clark (1983) as a heuristic device to show the tensions between the State, the academy and the market in the emergence of IA in the American university system, illustrated in Figure 2. Clark (2004) interprets the three sides of the Triangle as follows: 'state control, market influence and institutional self-control' (p.363), which I use as the basis for my own analysis from the perspective of the university system. On a structural level, the *State* is the

government and the mediating public agency, such as the Higher Education Authority; the *academy* includes the wider collegiality of the institution; the *market* considers the users of the institution such as prospective and current students, alumni and the community.

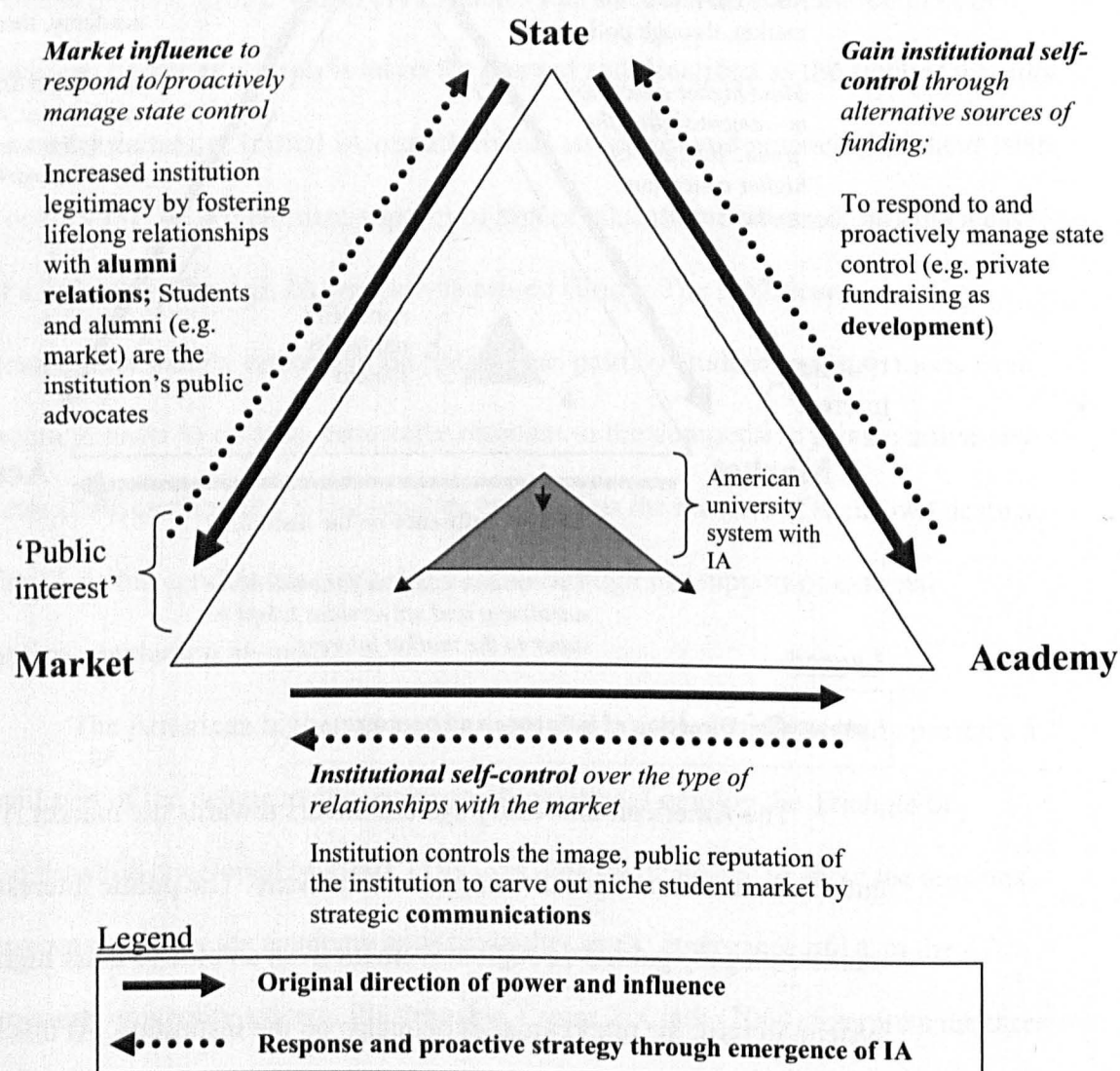
Figure 2 Origins of IA: The Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) showing the American University Climate influencing the emergence of Institutional Advancement (IA)



The American university system hovers towards the market. The academy is under pressure from both the market and the State. The public interest is with the market, a legacy gained through movement from an elite to mass higher education system, in turn, the market makes demands on the institution. At this stage, I contend the academy is the passive player in the exchange, that is, the academy is reacting to state control measures and influence from the market. The Government policy of mass higher education increased demand from the public for this education. With

reduced State funding and increased demand for student places, the academy was relegated to the role of service provider with scarce resources. The emergence of IA counters the power in this state-market-academy relationship by allowing a university to take a proactive approach, outlined in Figure 3. IA in American universities alters the position of the university system and the exchanges between the three actors:

Figure 3 Origins of IA: The Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) and the IA Response in the American University System



IA enables universities to be outward-facing, towards a public interest, balanced to consider its own needs and those of the public at the same time. The academy holds

more self-control and autonomy at the expense of less State control, by attracting more diverse sources of funding through philanthropy. Students and alumni are institution's ambassadors in the marketplace. A noteworthy alumna is instantly connected to her *alma mater*, as a means to legitimise the institution in the public sphere; an alumnus's donation to the institution is his gesture to show belief in the university's work in the public interest. Alumni also hold a vested interest in maintaining or developing the reputation of their *alma mater*—a direct investment in the value of one's own qualifications in the marketplace. The academy also controls the image and reputation of the institution through IA communications, as it addresses carefully the competition and builds the institution's reputation nationally and internationally, including through international university rankings.

The American university system in Figure 3 is denoted as a triangle, pulled equally in the bottom corners by market influence and institutional self-control, at the expense of less State control. While this is a simplification of the complex origins of IA, it provides the conditions to consider the emergence of IA in *Ollscoil*. The public interest of higher education remains with the market. By adopting IA practices, a university becomes proactive and at the same time responds to the needs of this market. Moreover, alumni are the living testament to the institution's success. A comprehensive alumni relations programme educates alumni in a role as university ambassadors in the public sphere, fostering lifelong loyalty to the institution. and IA plays a crucial role in publicly involving alumni in increasing the value of their *alma mater* in this marketplace.

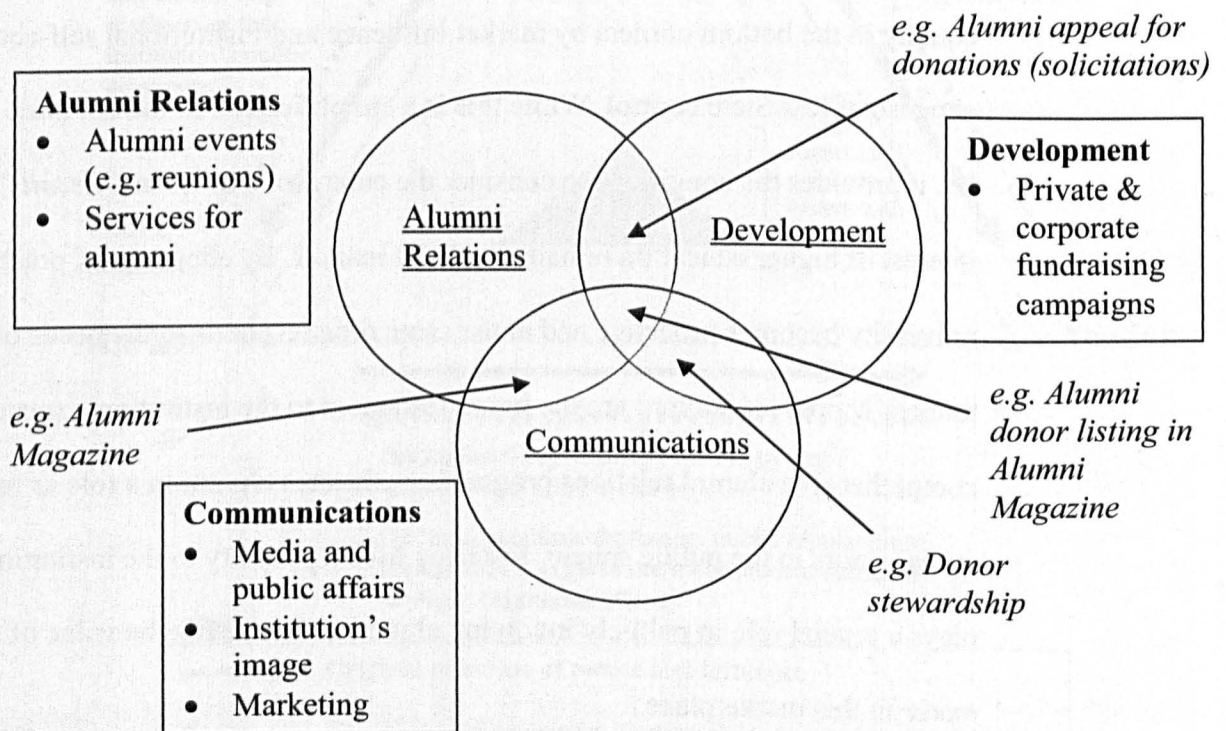
3.2 Key Characteristics of IA as a Framework for Analysis

Building a successful IA organisational structure is rooted in the internal structures of a university (Lippincott 2004; Muller 1986). Through a critical analysis of the literature, I developed four key characteristics of IA within an institution:

interdependence, integration, identification and inherence. While the IA components reflect the organisational structures and practice, these characteristics assess the extent to which IA has emerged or is embedded within the institution. The components show the breadth of IA work, while these characteristics show the depth of the impact within the institution.

Interdependence outlines the extent of the overlap between all three components within an institution. Communications, alumni relations and development—are dependent on each other towards greater aims of advancing the institution. Figure 4 shows the overlap between the components of IA, with the examples of activities that show relationship-building as a component of practice.

Figure 4 The Three Components of Institutional Advancement



Communications includes public affairs, media relations and marketing. As the most publicly visible IA component, communications is responsible for building

the profile and image of the institution. Alumni relations works directly with graduates and past students of an institution. With a suite of events and services, the alumni relations component is often the first point of contact between alumni and the institution. Finally, development relates to fundraising and philanthropy. Within the development component various fundraising appeals are initiated: annual giving, alumni giving, major gifts, prospecting significant philanthropic donations from individuals or organisations (Worth 2002; Caldwell 1986; Coll 1986). Development also has a role in donor stewardship—showing a donor that the funding committed to the institution is used appropriately and sowing the seeds towards the next donation. Communications also has a role in donor stewardship, which is to promote the responsible use of private donations to the wider public. The three IA components are not separate entities; the components work together and rely on each other to strive towards common university goals that Tromble (1998) describes as a ‘triad of harmony’ (p.xviii).

IA is *integrated* with the rest of campus activities, academic and administrative departments and services (Rowland 1986). The advancement ethos is the responsibility of all internal sections of the university (Kozobarich 2000; Volkmann 1998; Weerts 2007). IA is conveyed as an institution’s self-interested concept—the university, to advance itself internally, acts externally to raise the profile of the institution and build relationships.

In theory, all actors related to the institution *identify* with the university’s advancement ideals, fostered by an internal communications strategy, and by the example set by university leadership. Kozobarich (2000) stresses the wide range of university actors involved in IA: ‘Everyone at the university, from the newest freshman to the university president, plays a key role in institutional advancement’

(p.25). This enables the university to present a united front when appealing externally for support. Lippincott (2004) goes as far as noting that advancement is a passion built over time by those close to the institution, fostered by the commitment of staff.

Advancement is *inherence*, not a time-determined activity; the university is in a continuous state of advancement (Muller 1986; Lippincott 2004). Universities in North America integrate IA organisational structures as a key university system—from the alumni reunions to capital fundraising campaigns—varying only by breadth and scope. The internationally-renowned large university embeds the same basic IA practices as the small community-based university college. IA turns out to be a natural and intrinsic part of an institution's work.

These four characteristics describe how IA, in theory, manifests itself in an institution. The extent to which *Ollscoil* meets the parameters of these characteristics show the depth and the way in which IA has emerged in an Irish university setting. Other extenuating circumstances, that will be outlined in the following sections, also have a bearing on IA in an Irish university setting and are considered throughout the analysis.

3.3 Higher Education Conditions in Ireland

The higher education sector in Ireland is in a period of rapid change: an increased competitive environment, a decrease in State funding and an autonomy-accountability dichotomy. These changes clearly show an environment open to IA practice. Due to the limited scope of this study, I will present an overview of this climate and I focus my in-depth analysis to *Ollscoil*, the case study university. To show the effects of the emergence of IA practice, I will show the impact on *Ollscoil* as it relates to the relationship orderings of the state-market-academy in the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983).

IA organisational structures exist in all seven Irish universities: alumni relations offices, communication units and university foundations for fundraising activity. *Marketing, alumni relations* and *diverse sources of funding* are common discourse in Irish higher education institutions, according to the State and policy documents (OECD 2004; Skilbeck 2001; Prospectus 2007; HEA 2007; Éire 2005; HEA-IUA 2008). Skilbeck (2001) outlines the current state of Irish institutions: 'The steps that are needed to develop institutional capacity and capability in face of growth and to respond to external forces often require a shift from departmental differentiation and inwardness to a more integrated, institutional-wide strategy' (p.120). I contend the emergence of IA in an Irish university setting is a means to centralise and rebalance power in order to adequately meet the increasing needs brought about by the change.

The overdependency on State funding for Irish universities (HEA-IUA 2008; OECD 2004) is fraught by demands from the State and public agenda despite its congruence to a university's interest or expertise (Skilbeck 2001). The Irish Government steers the priorities of higher education to meet national priorities, such as the National Development Plan.⁶ For instance, additional State funding was made available to universities to address 'skills shortage areas' (OECD 2004, p. 46-7), or to advance State policy on the knowledge economy (Éire 2006; Skilbeck 2002). The Irish Government also encourages competition between institutions for research and infrastructure programmes, such as the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL). This rivalry between institutions is also apparent in the recruitment of students and the attracting of academic faculty. Despite the role of

⁶ The National Development Plan 2006-2013 is an Irish Government programme building economic and social infrastructure, human capital and enterprise development (Éire 2006) The NDP theme is Transforming Ireland- A Better Quality of Life for All, and the Irish Government describes the plan as 'sustainable economic growth, greater social inclusion and balanced regional development' (Ibid.)

universities as agents for the national agenda, State funding to universities is shrinking (Skilbeck 2001) and all Irish universities were faced with deficit positions in 2008 (Sutherland 2008).

The Universities Act 1997 aims to provide a balance between autonomy and accountability, with specific procedures for the internal mechanisms of governance (Éire 1997). The Act affirms the institutional autonomy of universities, while preserving the Government's agenda, as the main funding source for universities, to steer the policy and outline the parameters of accountability of institutions as first envisaged in the Department of Education and Science White Paper in 1995 (Éire 1995). Irish universities are attracted to the potential of IA as a means to build a new income stream through private donations, thus decreasing the dependency on State funding and increasing institutional autonomy.

3.3.1 The *Ollscoil* Response to the Higher Education Context

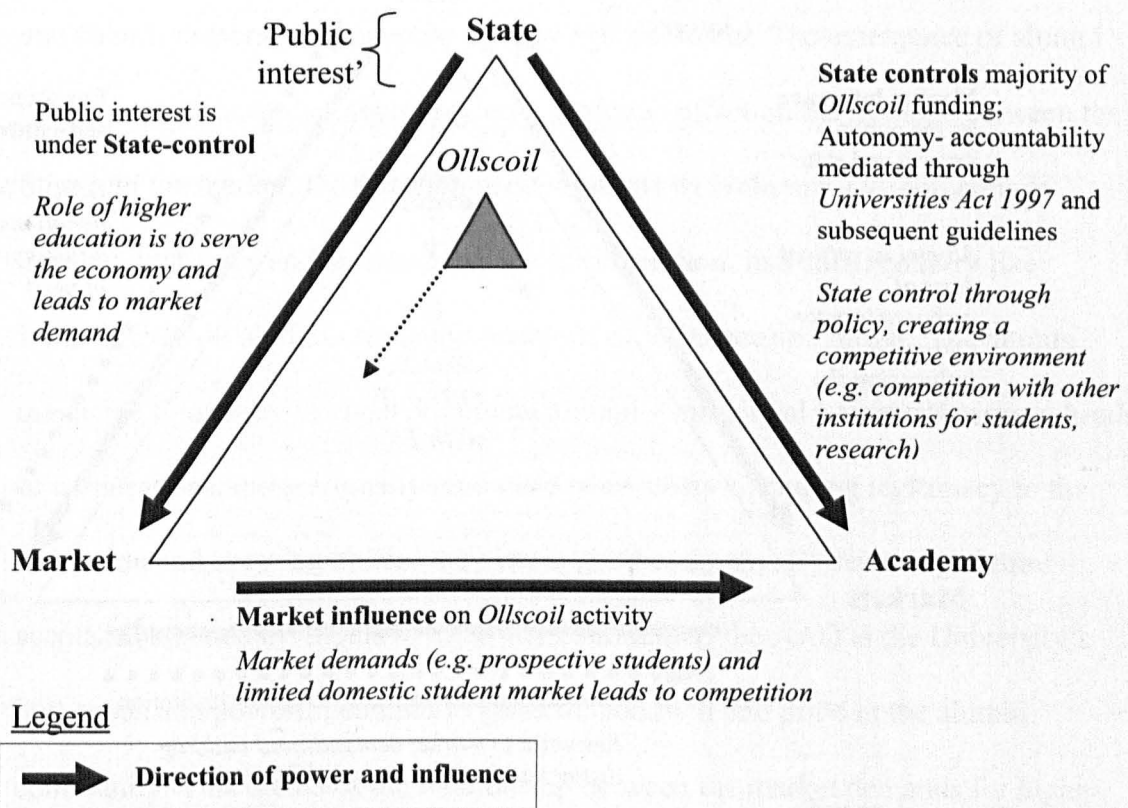
The development of IA at other Irish universities influenced *Ollscoil* to establish IA organisational structures and practice. From student enrolment to State research grants, a discourse of competition to describe other Irish universities is observed frequently in the *Ollscoil* research (Interview- AOP-ID6; *Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 12; *Ollscoil* Document 22; *Ollscoil* Document 14; Interview- CMM-ID2, 1; *Ollscoil* Document 1). Evidence also suggests that IA practice at *Ollscoil* is in place to address this competitive discourse. The *Ollscoil* Communications & Marketing Manager remarked: 'It is crucial that *Ollscoil* invest in marketing- it is new for us but a lot of our competitors have been doing it for a long time and certainly have stepped up their activities' (Interview- CMM-ID2, 8). *Ollscoil* engages in certain IA practices simply to keep pace with other universities and not for the intrinsic value to the University. For instance, traditional strategies to

attract students for enrolment from regional hinterlands are no longer reliable and thus specific marketing is conducted to preserve and expand these catchment areas.

When *Ollscoil* acquired a relationship management software (i.e. an alumni database),⁷ the internal communications described this development as key for *Ollscoil* to compete with other universities (*Ollscoil* Document 12). Evidence suggests that there is some internal resistance to IA practice for the perceived negative role of the practice in addressing university competition (Interview- MAA-ID4). Therefore, instead of being an accepted strategic practice, IA at *Ollscoil* is perceived internally as a symptom (by a few) of a greater issue within the university sector, dismissed as an Americanisation or marketisation of the institution.

Figure 5 shows how the higher education conditions in Ireland impact the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*:

Figure 5 *Ollscoil* considering the Irish Higher Education Conditions on the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983)

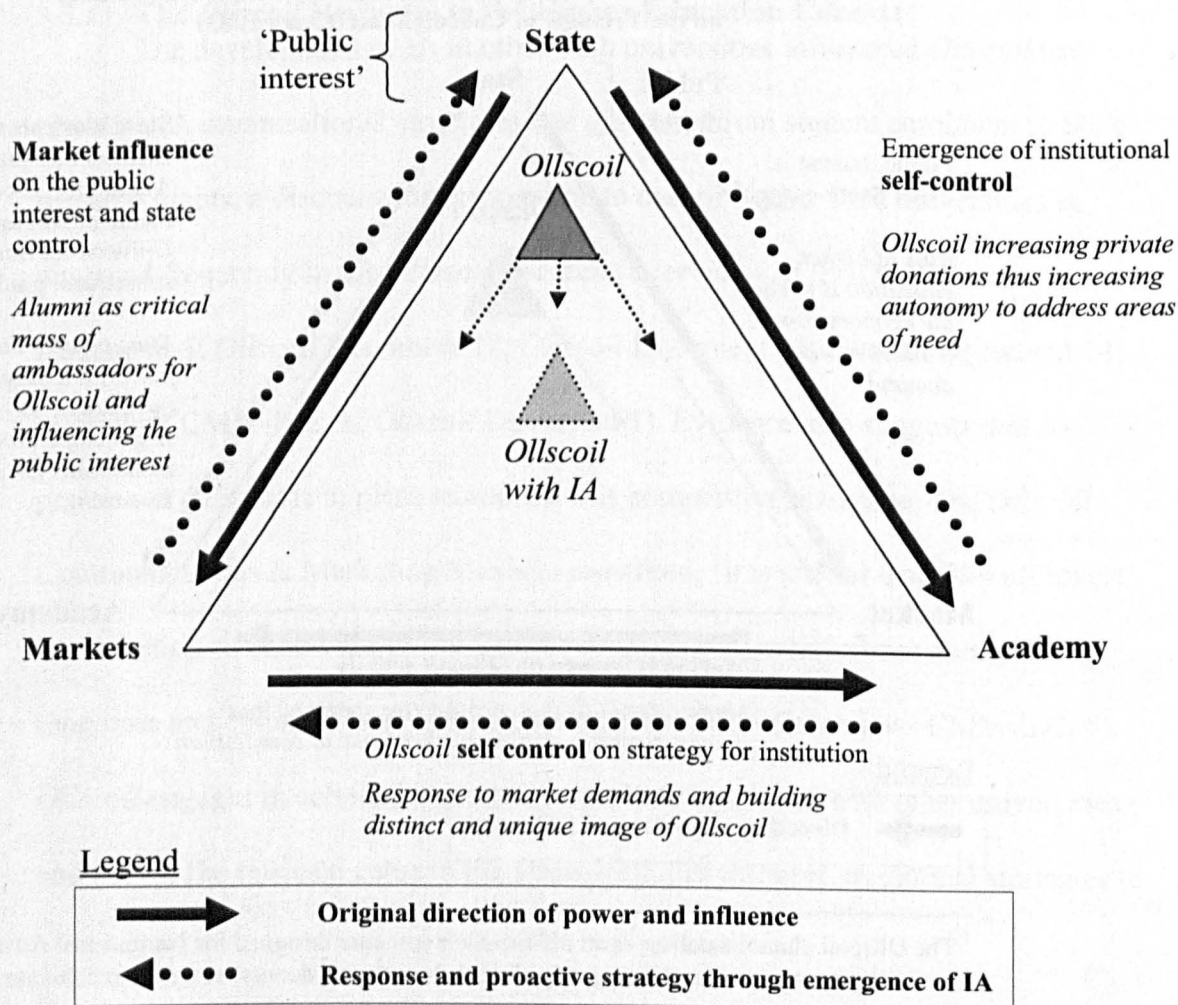


⁷ The *Ollscoil* alumni database is an off-the-shelf software designed for Institutional Advancement. The database manages contacts, usually alumni, friends and donors, as a tool to cultivate relationships.

Ollscoil as the academy becomes a reactive agent in this scenario. The market makes demands on the *Ollscoil* for programmes, emanating from the national priorities controlled by the State. The State also exerts control over the academy creating a tension between the accountability and autonomy of the institution. *Ollscoil* is located close to the State that holds the purse strings for the institution, responding to pressure and moving towards the market. The academy, as a service provider, becomes the peripheral actor in this triad of relationships. I argue that IA practices, properly administered would help to reshape these orderings, enabling *Ollscoil* to gain more control and power with both the State and the market.

The three IA offices at *Ollscoil* are involved in responding to the tensions from the higher education climate, shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Using the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) to outline the Emergence of IA Components on *Ollscoil* Relationships



The Communications & Marketing Unit (CMU) mediates the tensions between the market and the State by enhancing the position and the profile of the institution. For example, while Schools Liaison Office at *Ollscoil* conducts student recruitment activities, the CMU changed the date of Open Day to coincide better with dates for prospective students to make university selections, in response to the control of the State examinations system and university selection system. Moreover, the CMU also concentrates on national and even international media coverage to address the University's expressed priority of increasing their standing in the international university rankings, looking beyond the State for legitimacy and the public interest. Through the CMU, *Ollscoil* could balance market influence by controlling the response: decisions on how the institution presents its image or selects news stories through IA practice.

The Alumni Affairs Office (AAO) at *Ollscoil* maintains links with alumni and friends dispersed all over the country and the world. The emergence of alumni relations practice at the institution has a profound effect on the tensions between the State and the market. By fostering good relations with alumni, *Ollscoil* aims to develop advocates and ambassadors for the institution. In a small country like Ireland, *Ollscoil* alumni are also in positions of influence and power. The alumni magazine frequently features prominent alumni—influential politicians, artists, heads of corporations, internationally renowned researchers—bringing legitimacy to the institution and showing alumni they are in good company. By featuring alumni accolades and achievements to the wider community, the AAO is the University's innocuous and powerful conduit to generate goodwill and pride in the alumni community. This mediates the relationship between the market demands for higher education and the State by demonstrating the influence of alumni in society for the

public interest. The AAO also provides alumni programming such as reunions and networking opportunities, based on the needs of the alumni as an emerging *Ollscoil* market. This lessens the polarity of the market-State debate, pulling *Ollscoil* further away from the State and towards the market.

With the majority of funding from the State, *Ollscoil* has in the past been held firmly under State control. The President acknowledges the increasing role of private funding at *Ollscoil* (*Ollscoil* Document 54) due to inadequate State funding. By increasing private donations to the University Foundation, the institution increases its own autonomy with the ability to respond to need without relying on the State, such as building a new recreation complex supported exclusively by philanthropy. Increasing private fundraising contributes to a positive mindset at *Ollscoil*, showing that IA practice is helping to steer the course of the University. The intention is to draw *Ollscoil* from its present position close to the State towards a closer position to the institutional self-control of the academy and the influence from the market.

The three components of IA pull *Ollscoil* in the direction of both the market and the academy, shifting the institution further down the middle of the triangle. In Ireland the State is the primary funding body and policy maker for the higher education sector. IA enables the academy to adapt from reacting to the external environment to proactively operating in the environment, in a position to anticipate and manage change. Moreover, IA adds a dimension of competition between the institutions. *Ollscoil* and other institutions respond by defining a strong brand and strategically engaging in public relations with the wider community, including with prospective students.

3.4 Key Characteristics of IA at *Ollscoil* within the Institution

As an outsider, I observed IA practice that mirrors international IA practice: the University's logo and colours are visible throughout the campus; alumni events

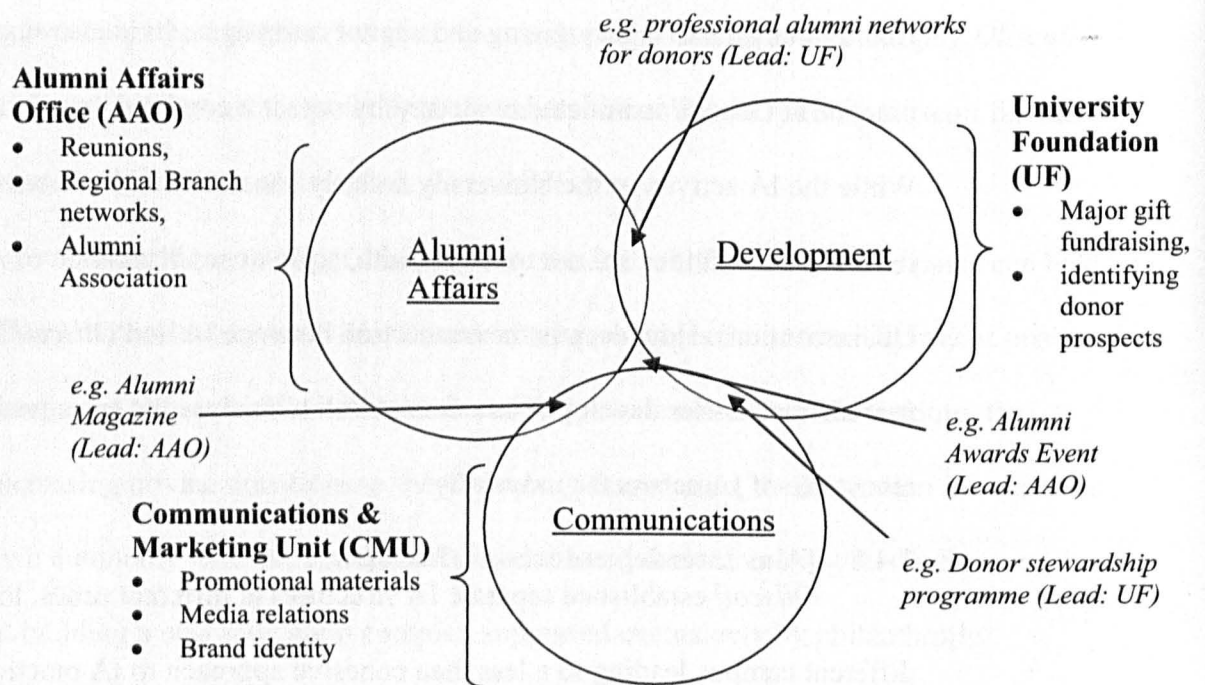
and services such as reunions and a “find a friend” service; fundraising initiatives from major gifts to legacy giving and capital campaigns. Evidence suggests that IA practice at *Ollscoil* is initiated or steered by one or a combination of the IA offices. While the IA activity at the University is fairly consistent with international practice, the *Ollscoil* activities are not to the breadth, scale or sophistication of American or UK institutions. How deep is the connection between IA and *Ollscoil*? I apply the four characteristics developed as a framework to analyse the emergence and resonance of IA across the university.

3.4.1 IA as Interdependence at *Ollscoil*

Ollscoil established separate IA structures at different times, located in different campus leading to a less than cohesive approach to IA practice. The University also views the three IA component-based organisational structures as separate entities, engaged to conduct particular tasks. This fragmentation is reinforced by *Ollscoil* management as they do not recognise an automatic interdependence between IA components.

The overlap between IA components is less prominent at *Ollscoil* than outlined in IA literature, as outlined in Figure 7. Although the evidence shows limited cooperation between the separate IA offices, there remains an observed collegiality between the three offices. IA activity tends to be a separate practice or lead by one dedicated office. In fact, as three separate offices, the boundaries of work observed were strong, with one office taking the lead on an initiative, then handing over the responsibility of the initiative as it progressed instead of an integrated team effort. The research also suggests that the IA practice is lead by either the AAO or University Foundation, whereas the CMU takes the lead on initiatives with a wider University remit, such as marketing materials or media relations.

Figure 7 IA components and practice at *Ollscoil*



Legend

CMU-	Communications & Marketing Unit, <i>Ollscoil</i>
UF-	University Foundation, <i>Ollscoil</i>
AAO-	Alumni Affairs Office, <i>Ollscoil</i>

Responsible for raising the University’s public profile, the CMU initiates the *Ollscoil* marketing campaigns, maintains University branding and design, oversees publications, manages media relations, and organises Open Day—*Ollscoil*’s student recruitment event. Internal communications, recently added to the CMU remit, is a new function for the University. The staff Intranet and newsletter, provide a centrally-controlled platform to highlight the University’s achievements linked to IA practice, while educating and informing staff on internal and external IA discourse.

The AAO practice is also consistent with international IA systems: organising alumni reunions, producing an alumni magazine, establishing regional branch networks, and supporting the Alumni Association Board. The primary role of the AAO is building relationships with *Ollscoil* alumni. Apart from the alumni magazine sent to all alumni with active postal addresses, the AAO provides services that are

alumni-initiated, that is, the onus is on the individual alumnus to request a service, join a club, attend a reunion and re-engage with the institution after graduation.

Ollscoil philanthropy, from prospecting to stewarding private donors, is the responsibility of the University Foundation. Other private fundraising programmes are also organised by the Foundation, such as the Legacy Society, for those wishing to leave a bequest in their will (*Ollscoil* Document 3; *Ollscoil* Document 17) and professional graduate networks, with paid membership for alumni in specific professions, such as engineering (*Ollscoil* Doc 16). A separate Foundation Board includes representation from the *Ollscoil* President, past *Ollscoil* donors along with individuals with a proved capacity to generate prospective donations (Interview- DD-ID2). The role of the Foundation is to attract private funding and to stay at arms-length with government relations. Applications for State funding are not a recognised IA activity and is the responsibility of a separate *Ollscoil* office.

The interdependence between IA offices at *Ollscoil* is ad hoc, based on specific initiatives or events and not an ongoing close linkage. Cooperation, especially between the CMU and either the AAO or University Foundation is documented, especially to communicate IA activities to the public such as media releases highlighting a major donation, or an upcoming alumni reunion. These initiatives show the value of IA to the wider university community with communications as the conduit. The affinity credit card shows interdependency between all three IA offices: the CMU promotes the credit card to the public; the AAO targets the alumni population and negotiates the contract with the supporting bank; the University Foundation arranges that a percentage of spend from each card, donated by the bank, goes to the Alumni Fund and is targeted towards student projects of greatest need. This example shows how the cohesion between IA

components to meet the specific component aims: promoting the institution; showing the connection of alumni to the institution; initiating a culture of giving, albeit small- and indirect, by the alumni community.

The physical separation of the three IA offices also poses limitations on the building of IA interdependence. The IA offices are located in different places and removed from the main management core of the University.⁸ This accentuates the isolation of IA operations from the core administrative functions of the University. Even within each IA office, the findings indicate defined boundaries to work, where one IA office performs a task, then passes the task to the next IA office in sequence instead of IA offices working together. The AAO, for instance, sees its role as supportive to the University Foundation: 'to prepare the ground so it is fertile for fundraising efforts' (MAA-ID4, 2). However, the University Foundation is not actively soliciting all alumni for donations, thus creating a gap between alumni engaged in AAO-organised activities and the transition towards making donations.

3.4.2 IA as Integration at *Ollscoil*

IA emerged at *Ollscoil* as three separate organisational structures. *Ollscoil* established each IA office at different times, once it was determined by University management and Governing Authority as a necessity for the institution's development. This new IA presence also coincided with pressures from the higher education climate: to raise the profile of the institution nationally and internationally; to vie for new students and innovative developments for the institution; to increase the diverse funding sources. The three IA offices report to the same Vice-President, responsible for strategic and external affairs. The internal IA structures—

⁸ With the historical legacy of the original Information and Media Relations Office in the main building reception, this has remained, albeit separate from the main administration block of the building, replaced by the Communications & Marketing Unit. The Alumni Affairs Office and University Foundation office are located in a refurbished cottage removed entirely from the main administrative and management building.

organisational charts, job titles, roles and responsibilities, are consistent with international standards.

Just prior to selecting this case study, *Ollscoil* established a Communications & Marketing Unit, subsuming the existing Information & Media Relations Office. With this new IA structure, the University appointed the first *Ollscoil* Communications & Marketing Manager and two marketing officers to add to the information staff team of four. The CMU was set-up to build the *Ollscoil* public profile nationally and internationally along with providing strategic marketing to target prospective students.

The Alumni Affairs Office manages the Alumni Association Board that steers the programmes and services for over 50,000 *Ollscoil* alumni. With three employees, led by an Alumni Affairs Manager, the office works with an Alumni Association Board of twelve volunteer members including the University President and a student representative. An *Ollscoil* restructuring exercise created the present Alumni Affairs Office and end the Alumni Club, a paid society with limited alumni members. By shifting to an inclusive Alumni Association where all graduates are automatically members, the AAO inherited a legacy of disenfranchised alumni involved in the original Alumni Club along with the challenge of engaging a large and diverse alumni community.

The University Foundation is a separate legal entity from *Ollscoil*, as is common of the IA development component in Ireland.⁹ The Director of Development leads eight staff members and a Foundation Office in the United States.

⁹ Universities in Ireland established separate, legal non-profit foundations in order to generate private funding for the university, without the risk of impacting the university core State budget. Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) encouraged the establishment of the Foundation system, providing the start-up capital for some Foundations, including at *Ollscoil*. While AP was interested in funding targeted university projects, a Foundation system ensured donations remain distinctly separate from and not a replacement for State funding.

The University Foundation personnel work for the Foundation, not *Ollscoil*, fundraising on behalf of the University and accepting private donations from alumni benefactors, corporations and philanthropists. The University Foundation is co-located with the AAO in a separate building on campus, while the CMU is a short distance away housed in the main administrative block.

The University leadership recognise the potential for IA to develop the institution. There are several examples of the start to the integration of IA within the University. For instance, both the CMU and the University Foundation are encouraged by the *Ollscoil* management decision to focus on six main research areas. This allows the University to develop a targeted approach to building the University's profile, highlighting expertise in the public domain in these research areas, and 'finding and promoting the University's media stars' (Interview- CMM-ID2, 17). The University Foundation sees this strategy as an opportunity to match private donors to areas of particular expertise and a more targeted approach to fundraising (Interview- DD-ID2). This shows the capacity and power of IA to recast the traditional work of the academy towards appealing to the market.

The former *Ollscoil* Strategic Plan and complementary capital fundraising campaign outlined twenty-four University priorities across the academic units and services (*Ollscoil* Document 1). The new Strategic Plan references only eight key priorities and capital projects. The University consulted with the University Foundation during this process to ensure that these focused priorities would be attractive areas for private donations (Interview- DD-ID2), learning from the last Plan that some projects hold little appeal with private donors. This demonstrates the integration of IA in steering the tone of the University's strategy. These two examples illustrate the integration of IA across the institution, the power and

legitimacy held by the IA offices (the CMU and University Foundation specifically) to steer the University into making decisions towards change for the institution.

Integration of IA also faces some limitations at *Ollscoil*. Some IA practice operates in “silos,” apart from the rest of the institution. The data suggests IA office personnel are viewed as the specialists, hired to provide the solutions towards any disparities in IA-related work (*Ollscoil* Document 12; *Ollscoil* Document 5; Interview- CMM-ID2; Interview-AOP-ID6). For example, *Ollscoil* indicated a desire to raise its national profile, viewed as a CMU-led initiative. As such, senior management and academic faculty were reluctant to engage in the process by not granting interviews to the media. It is not clear whether this reluctance by faculty and management is because they perceive media relations as the responsibility of the CMU, or they do not fully understand the importance of their involvement or they are unwilling to participate due to lack of experience. This dilemma is articulated as:

People want it [high profile media coverage] but they see it as the job of the Communications & Marketing Unit, they don't see their role in it. We can often struggle to even get comments from senior management members... there is a desire to get the coverage but a fear of the media...so there is an element of reluctance to engage but a desire for the University to engage (Interview- CMM-2, 20).

The rhetoric suggests that the University supports *IA practice* as conducted by *IA personnel*, however, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the wider role of the University to its contributing to this work. The new CMU, for instance, is cited as the University's solution to marketing and communication deficiencies (Interview-US-ID2; Interview- AOP-ID6; *Ollscoil* Document 5). The evidence suggests *Ollscoil* senior management views this IA office as the means to solve problems regarding competition, marketing and funding, abdicating responsibility for this challenge. Therefore, embedding IA in systems appears to be integrated at a strategic level,

although there are gaps of integration by key personnel or management in IA practice.

3.4.3 IA as Identification at *Ollscoil*

The IA offices are also charged with educating the internal and external communities on *Ollscoil*'s IA activity. *Ollscoil* presents IA terminology in the public domain as a learning device: terms like *alumni*, *alma mater* or *fundraising* along with *solicitation* and *alumni fund* are visible across *Ollscoil* publications and are generally prefaced by subtle but explicit definitions, depending on the target audience. The Manager of Alumni Affairs notes the dilemma faced by IA personnel in engaging with the public:

When I say where I'm from- do I spell it out?...
"Alumni" is not in common parlance. So when I write things I do have a mind to put in the word "graduates" at this stage in most communications when I'm talking to my alumni body they know what it is....we [Alumni Affairs Office] like to introduce it as well ... and there is an advertisement on the reverse of the conferring booklet. So that if there is a long and boring conferring—even your own- you're going to say- OK alumni are graduates- I am one. (Interview- MAA-ID4, 4)

This is an example of how the IA offices uses communication materials as an educational tool on the term alumni, especially for new cohorts of graduates. For the student population—the future alumni—the AAO placed an advertisement in the Students' Union Handbook defining the term alumni with the caption 'A is for Alumni' (*Ollscoil* Document 25, p.140). In addition, the Students' Union added the term alumni into the glossary of the Handbook (*Ollscoil* Document 25, p.129).¹⁰ It is

¹⁰ In the Students' Union Handbook the term alumni is defined as: 'individuals who have left a school, college or university after completing their studies there' (*Ollscoil*- Doc 25, p.129). This is close to the generally accepted IA definition. Alumni are not equated with graduates, although this is commonly applied as the definition, including in this study. This wider definition opens an opportunity for those that completed any length study, even without a qualification, to re-engage and build an affinity with the institution.

through this small and subtle effort that is an attempt to build alumni as a normative term among students.

Through internal communications materials, the education on IA terminology is subtle but dogged. For instance, the staff newsletter reported on the conferring for honorary graduates, with the President quoted as saying: 'I take pride on behalf of the University in welcoming these individuals to the ranks of our alumni. In becoming honorary graduates they join a network of over 50,000 alumni' (*Ollscoil* Document 12, 1). By using *alumni* and *graduates* interchangeably, this example shows how *Ollscoil* attempts to build awareness of IA discourse within the University community while attaching the value of alumni to widen the *Ollscoil* network. Another example shows the same descriptive tone in communications: 'The Alumni Awards recognise individual excellence and achievements among the more than 50,000 *Ollscoil* graduates worldwide' (*Ollscoil* Document 11, p.2). The subtle link between *alumni* at the beginning of the sentence and *graduates* at the end is one of a number of such educational examples of introducing IA discourse to the general public and the legacy of applying international IA practice to an Irish university.

The University Foundation delicately balances the educational elements of informing the public on fundraising practice, treading lightly to avoid any risk of offending the target group. Prospective donors, especially from the United States, are typically familiar with the fundraising cycle (Interview-DD-ID2). Equally, while some major Irish donors may understand the fundraising procedures, the Director of Development is keenly aware that the culture of fundraising is still in development: 'People have used the excuse that we don't have the culture, but we have to create the culture' (Interview- DD-ID2, 14). Therefore, to attract new donors, smaller campaigns are employed, such as an Alumni Fund, with non-personalised

fundraising appeals in the Alumni Magazine. The solicitation has a dual purpose: to educate the public, in this case the alumni community, on the value of fundraising to the institution with explicit instructions for prospective donors on the steps and to make a strong case for the need of the donation (*Ollscoil* Document 3). This is a means of familiarising the general alumni population with fundraising, laying a foundation for more direct fundraising appeals to alumni in future.

The work by the IA offices to educate on IA practice pays dividends and signs are present that the internal community is beginning to understand and to become advocates for University advancement. For instance, the Students' Union President was appointed to the Alumni Association Board in order to show the benefit of the Association to future alumni and get the 'bigger picture for the University' (Interview- SUP-ID6, 12). This strategy allowed the Students' Union President to appreciate the need for private donations to the institution because of 'underfunding' (Interview- SUP-ID6, 22) and to understand the balance between organising a protest on tuition fees on Open Day, while not sabotaging the event for prospective students as a University recruitment tool (Interview- SUP-ID6; Interview- CMM-ID2; Field Notes, FN-04).

My field work shows that the *Ollscoil* community identifies widely with the IA communications function. There is widespread consistent use of the official University logo and colours in communications materials. The design manual is controlled centrally, and it is generally understood and applied across the campus with compliance. The strong visual identity permeates across the University. There seems to be a general appreciation of the importance of promoting and building the profile of the University; the appropriate use of the logo on the academic posters to signage demonstrates the pride of associating with *Ollscoil* (Field Notes, FN-02).

The Foundation, even as a separate legal entity, also uses the *Ollscoil* design to promote its work on behalf of the University. Moreover, publications from private bus companies to restaurants near the campus attempt to emulate the University's visual identity (*Ollscoil* Document 23; *Ollscoil* Document 25; *Ollscoil* Document 5). With imitation as the greatest form of flattery, this demonstrates the power of the *Ollscoil* brand extending beyond the campus to the local area.

The Alumni Affairs Office conducts a number of initiatives to raise student awareness of the Alumni Association. Some initiatives are shown to be particularly successful with current students, such as offering funding to student societies and establishing a presence at student events, such as Clubs and Societies Day. The identification with IA practice is such that the Students' Union are now proactive in arranging the ongoing participation of the Alumni Affairs Office in student events (Interview-MAA-ID4).

Despite the expansion of the Governing Authority to alumni and community representation, the IA ideals or practice are not generally an important issue for the *Ollscoil* governing body. The legacy of having the University Foundation as a separate legal entity from the University has abdicated the Governing Authority's interest and responsibility in fundraising (Interview- US-ID2). Moreover, the governing body does not generally participate in alumni affairs events (Interview-MAA-ID4, Interview- AGA-ID8) or connect with the IA offices. In addition, there is no formal reporting or representation arrangement between the Governing Authority and the Alumni Board, even with the four graduates (alumni) representatives (Interview- MAA-ID4; Interview- AGA-ID8). There is a sense that the Governing Authority has entrusted the IA offices and the University Foundation to conduct IA activities autonomously for the University.

The Alumni Association and the University Foundation have separate Boards, and both of these Boards are distinctly separate from the University's own Governing Authority. A Foundation Board member is responsible for attracting funding to the institution through influence, networking, passion and knowledge of philanthropy (*Ollscoil* Document 16). Since the State controls the criteria for the appointments to the *Ollscoil* Governing Authority, there is little possibility or flexibility of including donors to the position. International IA practice encourages donors to engage in internal governance structures in order to bridge the gap between the IA practice and the general matters of the institution. The Foundation Board instead becomes the conduit to engage donors in steering University philanthropy (Interview- DD-ID2). The President has a close relationship with the University Foundation and acts as the link for the Governing Authority on Foundation developments (Ibid.). As a result, this disconnection between the governance structures of the institution and the IA practice leads to limited identification by the Governing Authority in *Ollscoil's* IA efforts.

This visual image and identity of *Ollscoil*, as created by the IA offices, is recognised and supported by the markets themselves: students, alumni and the community at large. The IA practice along with this visual image has some resonance with the academy, as a means to promote to the market. The data suggests that the alumni relations and fundraising components are still emerging and not given widespread support or identification in the wider *Ollscoil* community.

3.4.4 IA as Inherent at *Ollscoil*

Despite the lack of full identification with all IA practice, *Ollscoil* has embedded IA within the institution. The *Ollscoil* logo and colours are immediately recognisable in Irish higher education circles. However, the CMU continues to provide a wide education on the importance of using the proper University name and

brand across the institution, and use internal staff publications to educate and highlight the importance of presenting a consistent public image (*Ollscoil* Document 13). For events coordinated directly by the IA function, there is a steadfast consistency in the brand use, such as with Open Day with special signage, t-shirts and brochures (Field Notes, FN-04). This sets an example of the level of consistency expected across the institution (Interview- CMM-ID2; Interview- MAA-ID4).

Ollscoil is an active member of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).¹¹ Staff members from the IA offices participate in CASE training and events to hone their skills in recognised IA practice. CASE also has a marked impact on the internal IA discourse at *Ollscoil*. IA practice developed at *Ollscoil* is a combination of standard CASE techniques along with replicating practice in other Irish universities.

The Universities Act 1997 requires all Irish universities to produce and publish a Strategic Plan. Not all university units are visible in the new Plan and the Office of the President is developing a complementary Operational Plan to show how each unit intends on meeting the targets under each theme (Interview- AOP-ID6). The last Strategic Plan mentioned philanthropy explicitly as a separate priority of the Plan. This new Plan describes resourcing, communications and outreach as themes related to IA practice showing an inherent recognition of the importance of this work as part of *Ollscoil* activity. Moreover, each of the three IA offices submitted their operational plans on how each office intends on meeting the wider strategic priorities of the institution.

¹¹ All seven universities in Ireland are members of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). The Manager of Alumni Affairs also indicated membership to the Alumni Officers Network of Ireland (AONI), affectionately known in the Alumni Affairs Office as 'annoy' (Interview- MAA-ID4, 29)—what is widely described as the reaction of alumni relations in the general public.

At first, *Ollscoil* used the term *campaign* to describe the University's concerted fundraising effort. Recently, the University changed from *campaign* to a brochure outlining the 'Campus of the Future'—a vision of projects that match *Ollscoil*'s 'strategic priorities' (Interview- DD-ID4-2, 3). This reduces any possibility of alienating donors unfamiliar with IA terminology, and widens the potential funding sources to include State funding, research grants *and* philanthropy. This fact attests that *Ollscoil* acknowledges the integration of philanthropy and donors into the University's operations (Interview- AOP-ID5).

Ollscoil is centrally controlled, with the Governing Authority and senior management holding the decision-making powers. I observed that, even in areas of decision-making for IA strategy, the central management also hold this control, from a decision on purchasing of the alumni database (*Ollscoil* Document 22) to the changing of the date of Open Day (Interview- CMM-ID2). Although the IA offices are the specialists in carrying out IA practice, these IA offices do not hold direct authority to make decisions without senior management's approval that supposedly considers the wider implications for the institution.

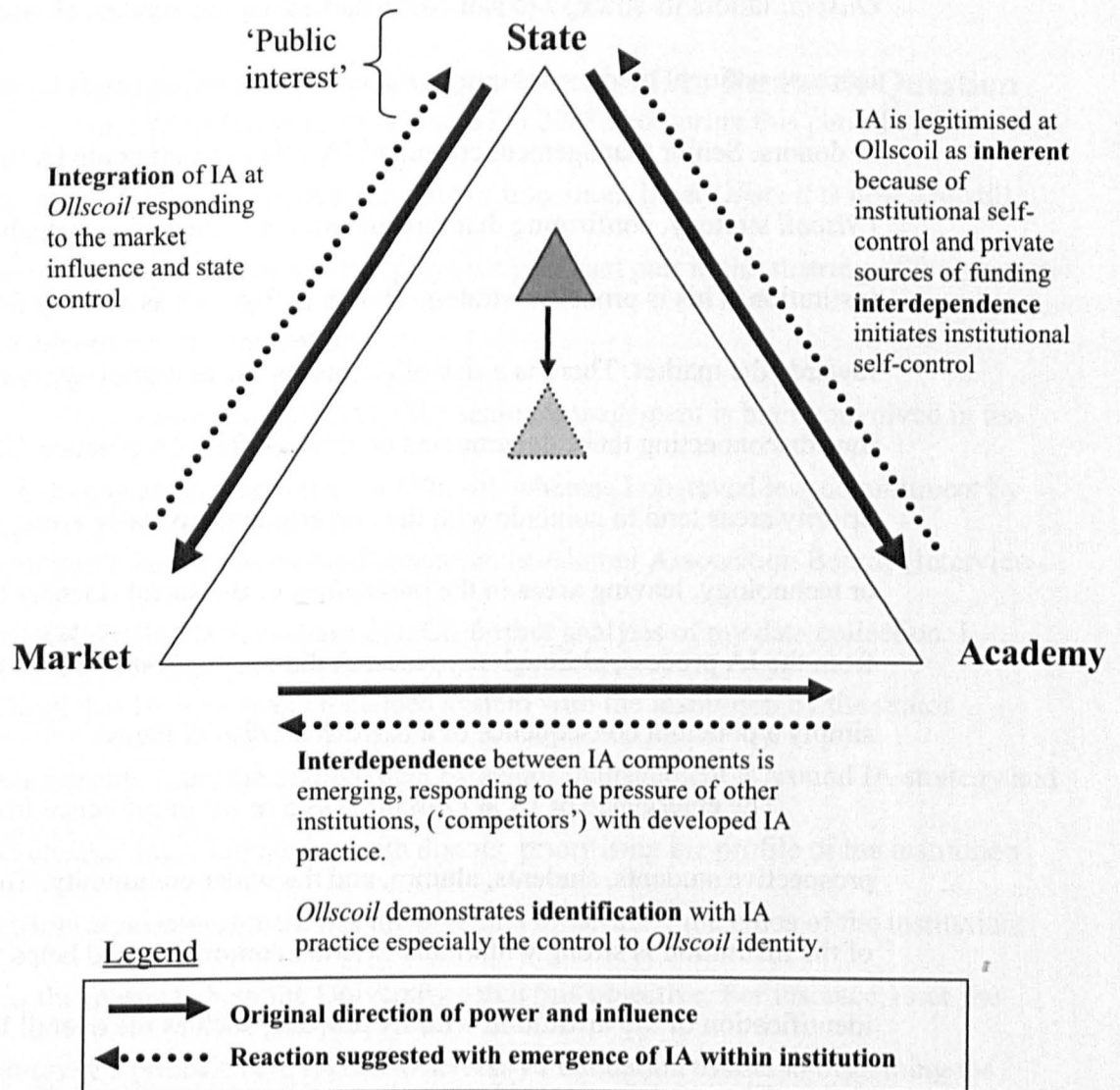
The inherent nature of IA is strong. IA practice is sufficiently embedded in the University operations, with centralised management control. This control enables *Ollscoil* to impact on the relationships with the State and markets. IA is a means for *Ollscoil* to respond to and proactively anticipate the higher education climate towards institutional self-control. As the Irish higher education sector changes, IA has become the natural conduit at *Ollscoil* to response to these changes.

3.5 Analysis of the Emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*

To analyse the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*, I return to the Triangle of Coordination to illustrate the changes and impact of IA attributes on *Ollscoil* and the

State-market-academy dynamic. Figure 8 illustrates the interactions and the nature of IA impacting the relationships between actors:

**Figure 8 Characteristics of IA on the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983):
Depth of the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil***



The analysis of interdependence between IA components in Figure 8 shows that although the emergence of IA stems from external conditions from the market and the State, the IA response at *Ollscoil* is dispersed, emanating from the academy outwards. In some cases the IA practice is coordinated between the three components within the institution, but not always, to form both internally or externally one consistent and cohesive response, supposedly operating together towards the same

end. This lack of coordination has an impact on the outside relationships and on building a reactive instead of proactive method of advancing the institution.

The extent of integration of IA at *Ollscoil* is a clear response to the market. *Ollscoil* tailors its strategy to suit IA by narrowing the number of research areas to increase national media attention and choosing capital priorities based on the appeal to donors. Senior management consulted IA offices to integrate IA thinking into *Ollscoil* strategy, confirming that this integration is viewed as valuable for the institution. This is proactive strategy shown in Figure 8 as moving from the academy towards the market. There is a risk of excluding the non-priority areas of *Ollscoil*, thus disconnecting these departments or services from IA practice. The University priority areas tend to coincide with the Government's priority areas, such as science or technology, leaving areas in the humanities or the social sciences to disengage from the IA process, although my research did not suggest that this was the case, but simply a potential consequence of a narrowed *Ollscoil* focus.

The emergence of IA at *Ollscoil* is as a result of influence from the market: prospective students, students, alumni, and the wider community. The identification of the institution is strong within this external community and helps feed the internal identification of the institution with IA practice, such as the overall University design. The identification of IA practice at *Ollscoil* gets this reaffirmation from the market and becomes a cycle between the market and the academy.

IA is only beginning to be embedded within the institution, and anchoring IA as inherence primarily focuses on a direct response to the State. As the institution changes and views areas that require change, *Ollscoil* desires more control over responding to change, thus IA practice is considered the way to bring about change, such as philanthropic funding for a much-needed recreation complex. IA allows

Ollscoil to control its own destiny and consider its own needs and priorities, instead of simply serving as an institution of the State. Despite the potential for IA at *Ollscoil*, it is still fairly new and there continues to be work done by the IA offices towards internal understanding of the IA practice.

3.6 Summary and Implications for the Main Research Question

The *Ollscoil* Strategic Plan ended in 2008 and during this period of gathering case study data, *Ollscoil* was in a state of transition. IA at *Ollscoil* is new and still emerging. Despite its newness it plays a significant part in the steering of the strategy and direction of the institution.

The research suggests that the senior management is highly involved in the Civic Engagement Committee at *Ollscoil*, whereas I observed less commitment by institution's leadership on the Foundation or Alumni Association Boards (Interview-OM-ID4; Gallo 2009, January 21). On further analysis of my data collection, I realised that IA is seen an embedded system with the institution by the senior management. Thus, the involvement by senior management is around IA strategy and decision making—interacting with donors, prioritising the profile of the institution. So while civic engagement has the potential of defining the ethos of the institution, IA is the means to help the University reach this objective. For instance, once the University's priorities are set, the University Foundation assists in discerning the priorities of interest for private donations (Interview- DD-ID2). *Ollscoil* is mindful of IA in strategy and priority-setting, noting that it makes the operations and realising these University aspirations much easier (Interview- AOP-ID6).

This Chapter presents an overview of the emergence of IA in an Irish university case study. Despite the fact that IA is not a common term, the findings show that in practice IA exists and is thriving at *Ollscoil*. Compared to an American university, IA activity at *Ollscoil* is somewhat limited, but continues to include all

three components—*communications, alumni relations and development*. When I first visited *Ollscoil* campus, the extent to which IA played a role at the University was obvious: The campus is peppered with branded signage, plaques acknowledge private donors on new buildings, and outreach to alumni is evident through various *Ollscoil* publications. As I delved further into the case I realised the extent to which IA is playing a role in influencing and being influenced by the higher education climate. This influence using IA does not happen in isolation; by building relationships with alumni, the focus of the next chapter, *Ollscoil* has created a mechanism to foster the institution's advancement.

Students and higher education institutions are like lovers—and a pointless breakdown of the intimate relationship between the two means that universities miss out on their perfect life partners.

Fearn 2009a, p.11

Chapter 4 Output: IA and Building Relationships with Alumni

The flurry of activity at the *Ollscoil* conferring ceremony is marred by the inclement weather. Graduands are running under umbrellas, dashing under archways and into campus buildings. The auditorium, despite its formality, offers an intimate gathering to an audience of proud parents and families. The backdrop of the stage stands proudly decorated with the *Ollscoil* logo in full colours; two rows of comfortable chairs are sitting ready to be occupied by the dignitaries.

As the music begins, the *Ollscoil* President, academic faculty and entourage of graduands file into the room. The rhythm set by the musicians is slow; the pace of the formal procession is somewhat hurried. The University Secretary starts the ceremony with an official proclamation in Latin. The President stands at the front of the stage while another official from behind the podium begins to recite the list of graduands names in alphabetical order. This scene is set in less than three minutes into the ceremony. A whirlwind of caps, gowns, and hoods are herded up to the stage to receive a parchment and quick handshake from the President. Intermittent applause congratulates graduates by degree of study.

The President approaches the podium to provide the formal address. The speech first acknowledges a long list of dignitaries and guests and finally turns to the graduates, outlining the opportunities and challenges ahead and concludes with an open invitation to “stay in touch” with their *alma mater*. Soon the newest *Ollscoil*

graduates are exiting in succession. To an outsider, the ceremony was conducted as a necessary bureaucratic exercise. The event lacked a sense of magnitude, of importance. The ceremony was certainly not a celebration of a major individual achievement for each and every graduate or a momentous event marking the rite of passage in becoming a member of the *Ollscoil* alumni community. After the ceremony, the gregarious praise begins and the atmosphere becomes jovial as family and friends huddle together. Photos are taken outside *Ollscoil* buildings, by an *Ollscoil* insignia, with parents, siblings, friends and other graduates. The President is timid and even reluctant to mingle with the crowd, accepting to be in photographs hesitantly with graduates and families, eventually extending handshakes and exchanging conversation. At that moment, affection for the institution is at its zenith.

Through Institutional Advancement (IA), a university aims to renew, capture and preserve this precious moment, to establish a lifelong rapport and relationship with alumni. As graduates celebrate a personal milestone, the institution should find it opportune to seize the moment to celebrate the inclusion and advent of the most recent graduates into their permanent community as equal partners with a bright and promising future.

This chapter develops an alumni relationship-building cycle through IA analysing both one-way and two-way interactions between alumni and *Ollscoil*. The previous chapter examined the emergence of IA practice as an input in an Irish university while this chapter concentrates on the interactions in building relationships with alumni as the outputs from this process.

4.1 Governance and Building Relationships

The case study vignette illustrates some interactions between *Ollscoil* and the newest alumni. From observation I contend *Ollscoil* treats this graduation as procedural, to satisfy degree requirements and not as a special event for graduates

and their families (Field Notes, FN-05). The President fulfilled formal duties, with only minimal interaction with alumni.

Kooiman (2000) defines interactive governance as a link between governance and society, that is, examining the role of stakeholder interactions to 'care for the societal institutions within which these governing activities take place' (p.139). In this study I focus on the interactions involving alumni and other *Ollscoil* actors. I use IA as the mechanism to build these relationships and I apply interactive governance to sharpen the focus on this 'care' or betterment of the institution.

4.1.1 University Governance

University governance is described as a 'creative anarchy' (Duderstadt 2001, p.38) or again an 'organised anarchy' (Scott 2001 p.132; Ibid., p.134). The complexity of university governance is widely acknowledged, if only because of the sheer number of actors affected by and involved in the process. University governance is distinct (Shattock 2006; Rosovsky 2001), balancing both a collegial nature internal to the institution, together with the demands of the external environment. Shattock defines higher education governance as: 'the constitutional forms and processes through which universities govern their affairs' (Shattock 2006, p.3). This definition combines corporate (agency) governance and stewardship⁷ governance. So while Shattock (2006) outlines the various structures from the communities of scholars to governing bodies (p.52-54), in this study I focus on the participatory element of the governance actors: governing body members, senior management and academic faculty (Ibid, p.51). I add students and alumni to these actors, as they play an increasingly important role in the interactions within a university. Several internal and external systems are involved in governance. Some systems are bound in legislation, others linked to a university's policy and

institutional traditions. Strategic interactions between actors are components of all university governance systems.

4.1.2 Interactive Governance

The Greek origin of governance means 'steering of boats' (Jessop 1998, p.30) and this research focuses on the individual rowers in the boats as they propel the vessels forward. With claims of the university as a cybernetic system (Hirsch 2001, p.133), I look at the university-alumni interactions affecting the internal and external university systems. Kooiman (2003) describes governance as relevant to building relationships stating: 'interactions shape actors and actors shape interactions' (p.8). Specifically, I assess how IA practice shapes the role of alumni-institution interactions to impact *Ollscoil*, summarised as the 'totality of interactions' (Ibid, p.4).

Through this recent trend of corporate governance in universities, the community of scholars is replaced or extended by a Board of key representatives, including alumni, to oversee compliance to State and institution policy. An interactive governance system, including a university's representative groups, anchors the institution in its reality, to help navigate its passage through wide representation. As a result, a university leader cannot make major decisions or steer an institution single-handedly.

What about alumni as a university public? Newman (2005) argues clearly defining publics for governance purposes can be fraught with difficulty and an alumni cohort is no exception. An alumnus may hold several identities: graduate, member of the local community, University staff member, a parent of a student, or even a student once again. Therefore when interacting with a university, this alumnus may represent any of these identities, depending on the circumstances. These other identities are finite, whereas an alumni status is a constant. Governance in this context relies on the interactions between the university and publics to shape the

institution. Moreover, I argue that IA is a means to build relationships with alumni, and interact with alumni *as alumni* and consider other identities related to the university, such as ambassador, volunteer, mentor, student recruiter, donor to benefit their *alma mater*.

Returning to the vignette, the graduates conformed to participate in the graduation and became alumni while the President was obliged to play a formal role in the proceedings. The informal interaction between the graduates and the President was less gracious than, say, the President's interactions reported with a prospective donor (Interview- DD-ID2). Both scenarios have unwritten expectations on the part of the President to interact with alumni, producing a different result—why? By deconstructing the alumni relationship building process and analysing the findings with interactive governance, offers an insight into the practice adopted in an Irish university. In this chapter, I concentrate on governing instruments that influence interactions (Kooiman 2003), as a means to an end, which, in this case is IA practice and the relationship-building cycle with alumni as output.

4.1.3 Interactive Governance and the Analysis of Output

I liken IA practice to instruments in the interactive governance process.

Kooiman (2003) describes instruments with two polarities: some instruments are formal, such as laws, while others are informal, like oral agreements; some instruments are “soft”, such as information and some are “hard”, such as regulations. Instruments are also context specific: an instrument may be accepted and supported in one context and face dissent and opposition in another. While Kooiman (2003) presents instruments as the enabler or catalyst for interactions in the hypothetical, I follow this precept in my analysis. ‘Selecting an instrument is close to forming an image; using an instrument is close to governing action.’ (Ibid., p.45-46). In this

case, I concentrate on the role of IA in eliciting interactions within *Ollscoil* and also the role of IA in steering interactions towards action.

The interactions of students and alumni with their *alma mater* are part of this widening of stakeholders considered in this study, with IA practice as the instrument steering these interactions. Higher education as a commodity, with assertions like *student as consumer* would send an inaccurate message to the relationships examined in this study. If students are considered only as mere consumers of an educational product, then we would have a time-bound interaction and a passive exchange: demand for a good (i.e. an education, skills and knowledge) and supply of a good (i.e. a university programme) terminating this commerce. I argue students-turned-alumni have a lifelong link to and stake in the institution. Interactive governance extends the active involvement of publics, in this case the alumni, to participate in *Ollscoil*, through interactions emanating from IA practice.

To analyse the output measure that emerges from the relationship-building cycle, I apply the orders of governance as interactive governance (Kooiman 2003; Kooiman 2001) as a heuristic device. First-order governance concentrates on process, that is described as addressing problems and creating opportunities (Kooiman 2003) with interactions. As a tool for day-to-day governing, first-order governance manages the 'diversity, dynamism and complexity of interactions' (Kooiman 2001, p.155). *Diversity* describes the tensions involved between generating equality of interactions across actors, with tailored interactions as close to the actors as possible (Kooiman 2003). *Dynamic* interactions are the tension between preserving the status quo and enacting change, by managing the 'cybernetic qualities' (Ibid., p.57) of the environment. The overlapping, interlacing interactions are also *complex*, with the range of interactions and actors changing rapidly

(Kooiman 2003). The areas of *diverse*, *dynamic* and *complex* interactions form part of an analysis that follows at the end of the chapter.

Second-order governance focuses on structures and the institutional conditions set to enact first-order governance, outlined as ‘...the care for and maintenance of these institutions’ (Kooiman 2003, p.153). I interpret second-order governance as the IA structures and practice that enable the building relationships with alumni to take place. Meta-governance follows as the next order of governance and will be addressed in the next chapter.

By analysing the data, a number of output themes emerged from the research. These themes contributed to the development of the four stages of the IA relationship-building cycle. First and second-order interactive governance become a heuristic device, a lens to view IA and the interactions between the institution and alumni.

4.2 IA cycle for Building Alumni Relationships

Building and managing relationships is a fundamental aspect to IA practice (Jacobson 1978 cited Jacobson 1986; CASE 2008; Tromble 1998; Lippincott 2004). The IA literature treats alumni relationship-building as a norm, an active progression towards building support for the institution. In the North American context, IA⁷ practice is anticipated: alumni expect to receive university magazines, reunion invitations and be asked to make a donation to their *alma mater*. On the other hand, within an Irish context the context of anticipation is still in the early stages.

As made clear in the previous contexts, alumni are in different stages of a relationship process with their *alma mater*. In order to clarify this position of different stages, I deconstructed the IA relationship building process into four stages: *affiliation*, *affinity*, *engagement* and *support*. The four stages combine the inner university mechanics of building relationships with alumni, illuminated by

interactive governance. Figure 9 provides a summary of the cycle, developed to illuminate and organise the case study findings:

Figure 9 IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni

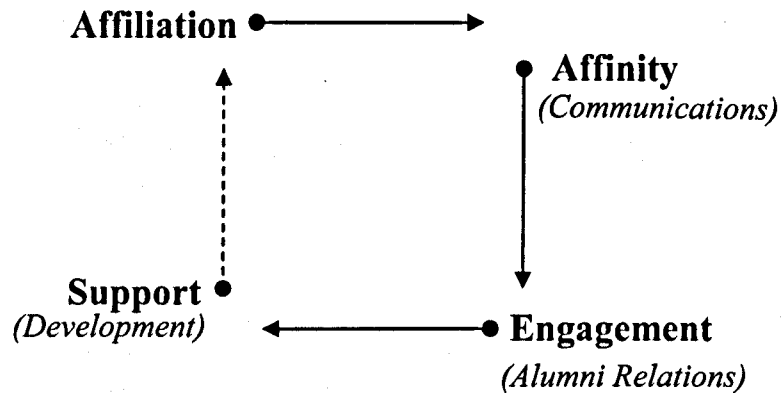


Figure 9 shows how each stage, starting with affiliation, progresses clockwise. In parentheses are IA components most likely to operate at each stage of the cycle: affinity is linked to communications; engagement to alumni relations; support to fundraising and development. The cycle is mapped out for an individual alumnus beginning with affiliation and running through to support going full circle. A university manages all four stages at once, with different alumni at different stages in the cycle. At anytime, an alumnus progresses through the stages one-by-one, or disengages from the cycle by no longer connecting or participating in the institution. Equally, an alumna can re-engage in the cycle, usually by renewing affinity with the institution. The relationship-building cycle follows a logical progression; it would be unusual to skip steps. For instance, a donation from a benefactor not known to engage or have affinity with a university is considered extremely rare (Worth 2002).

To combine the interactive governance and relationship-building cycle, I apply the orders of governance of this output process. Figure 10 demonstrates the output of this process with first, second-order governance towards meta-governance:

Figure 10 IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni applying the Orders of Governance (Kooiman 2003) as a Heuristic Device

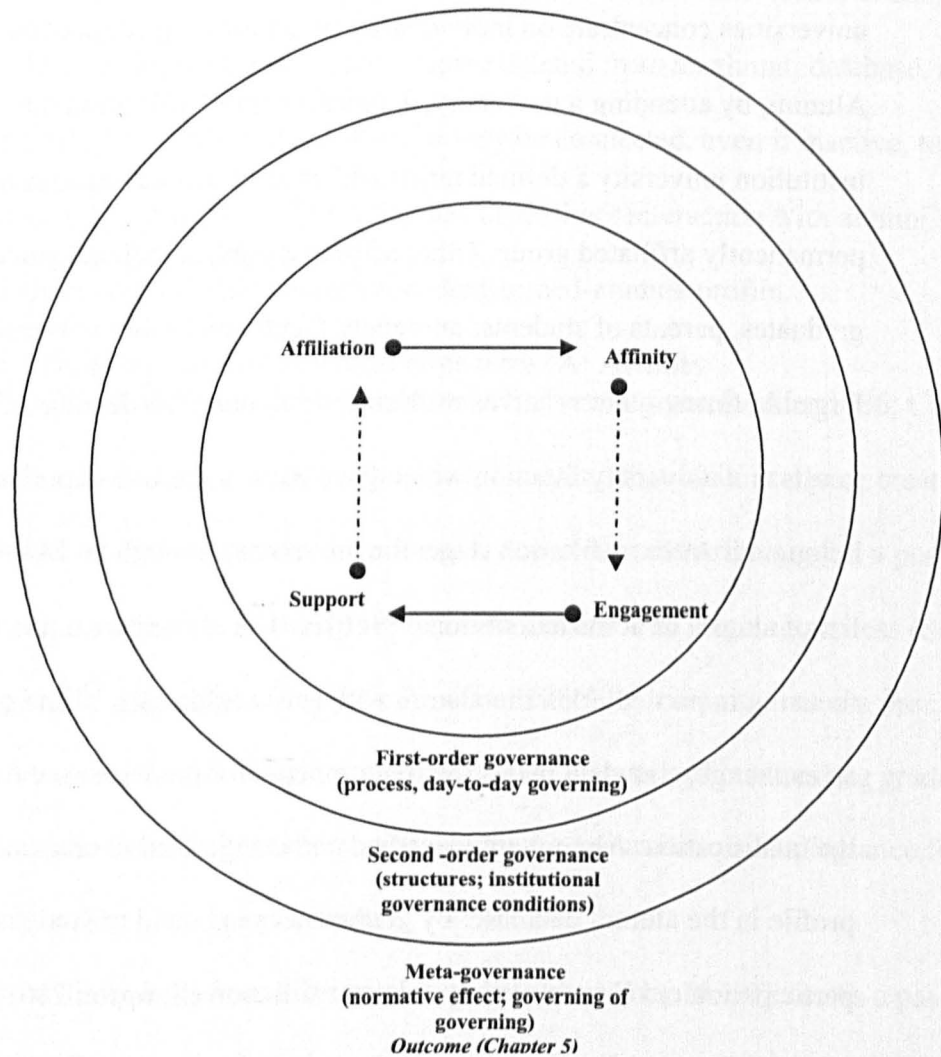


Figure 10 shows the orders of governance creating a ripple effect, starting with the IA relationship-building cycle at the centre of this process.

First-order governance as the first ripple from the centre, concentrating on process and opportunities from IA practice encountered on a daily basis (Kooiman 2003). Next, the IA organisational structures and conditions for IA are set in place as part of second-order governance. Finally, meta-governance is beyond the defined ripples, showing how the process and structures are normalised as outcome, addressed in the next chapter.

4.2.1 Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Affiliation

To build relationships with the public, the IA literature suggests that universities concentrate on individuals with an existing connection or affiliation. Alumni, by attending a university, acquire a natural affiliation that gives the institution university a defined target audience of former students and as a permanently affiliated group. Other affiliated publics include: students, children of graduates, parents of students, university faculty and other university personnel at large. At times, other relatives or friends of alumni also develop affiliation by being guests at a university function which gave them a positive experience and a sense of belonging. At the affiliation stage, the university, through an IA office, assembles a list of alumni to activate individual profiles. The alumni are a quantifiable group, focusing in particular on the alumni with active addresses.¹² The process begins with an exchange; a student meets the requirements for graduation, the university grants the qualification. Alumni are identified and categorised to create an up-to-date profile in the alumni database: by graduation year, field of study, student society participation or other university-related affiliation (Simpson 2001).

‘Recognising the interactions students have with organisations during the collegiate experience will help illustrate the connections they feel as alumni’ (Nailos 2009, p.1). This quote illustrates how the challenge at the affiliation stage is finding a meaningful linkage between the alumnus and the institution. The active alumni community is constantly changing and the database reflects the change as it becomes known to the IA offices; new graduates, deceased graduates, link between parent and child. The interactions are confined to obtaining and honing accurate alumni contact

¹² A university maintains a database of active alumni, with accurate contact details for each individual alumna, confirmed by regular correspondence. Inactive alumni, or “lost” alumni, are those individuals with incorrect contact details, usually identified with post returned to the institution. Inactive alumni records remain on the alumni database so if and when the alumnus is “found” their status is updated on the software system with updated contact details.

information. Normally, alumni may decide to deactivate their record and cease participation in the relationship-building cycle, although this scenario is considered rare. An individual alumni record is never deleted from an alumni database, as the record may be reactivated in future, or may be connected, even if inactive, to another alumnus (Tromble 1998). This stage has little direct interaction with alumni, as affiliations are inherited through a student-turned-alumna profile.

4.2.2 Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Affinity

The IA literature presents alumni affinity as a given (Muller 1986; Carl 1986; Tromble 1998; Simpson 2001). However, I contend that while studying creates an automatic student-university link, this link does not necessarily suggest a positive university experience. Building affinity with alumni is an ongoing process (Simpson 2001; Muller 1986; Tromble 1998; Rowland 1986). IA communications promotes the achievements of the institution or highlights the work of outstanding graduates, enabling alumni to gain or renew a sense of an association to and allegiance for the institution they attended as students.

Affinity is built and driven outwards to alumni by IA offices. As a passive recipient of university communications, an alumnus becomes active in processing the information to make choices according to how they feel about their *alma mater*. The purpose of communications is to inform, to educate and to enlighten alumni about the institution to which they are affiliated. Roszell (1986) calls this 'an information stage' (p.441), where alumni receive and interpret university messages. By segmenting alumni into cohorts, such as by field of study, the information conveyed to these cohorts becomes more targeted (Tromble 1998). Coll (1986) argues that external publics need constant re-education on the developments of the university. The interactions centre around alumni with the institution, contingent on alumni

interest and motivation: from taking pride in a university's recent achievements to reading updates on past classmates.¹³

The affinity stage is prefaced by the student experience. This experience influences how alumni develop or preserve their affinity for the institution after graduation. Precedent (2009) goes as far as to state that once a student begins to study they should be treated like an alumnus, calling them '*alumundergraduates*,' combining the word *alumni* and *undergraduate*, thus blurring the two identities for targeted IA communications.

The communications component of IA usually drives the affinity stage. An institution's correspondence and promotional materials to alumni relay a controlled university message. Affinity is a qualitative construct; it is difficult to determine whether the communication materials targeted to alumni are effective in building affinity. For instance, an alumnus may read the alumni magazine and the university is not necessarily privy to the reaction: does the alumnus feel nostalgic? Does it confirm or change alumna's view of the institution? The interaction between the institution and alumnus is based on two passive interactions: the institution to alumna through communications, and, the individual alumnus reading and interacting with the communications materials. There is a vast amount of IA literature devoted to improving communications with alumni, recognising the importance universities place in this stage to building relationships with alumni (Rowland 1986; Tromble 1998; Simpson 2001).

4.2.3 Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Engagement

Alumni with an established affinity to their institution will proceed to become engaged in the institution. So begins the two-way alumni-institution relationship in

¹³ Simpson (2001) cites research which states that the most popularly read sections of an alumni publication is the class notes and updates on fellow alumni.

earnest: The alumni respond to a planned activity, such as attending a reunion or IA-organised service. The literature provides examples of ways to engage alumni: organising class reunions; promoting continuing education (Carl 1986); offering affinity services, such as alumni travel events (Emerson 1986) and more recently facilitating online communities (CASE 2008). Many universities also offer affinity services, such as preferential group insurance rates or a university credit card, arranged through an IA office.

Alumni participation in university initiatives is based on affinity or the motivation of gaining something of personal value. Engagement is quantifiable; the IA office can track the number of graduates in a particular year that attended an alumni reunion or availed of a service. Thus, the IA office can set targets for future engagement-related activity. Engagement also enhances an alumna's individual record on the alumni database by enhancing a profile of the alumna's involvement in IA-initiated activity.

Up to this stage, the alumna is passive in this process. At the engagement stage, the alumnus elects to participate proactively. Alumni relations is the primary IA component involved at this stage in the process. The interactions concentrate on alumni self-interest and the opportunities that the university provides for alumni to engage in or sustain these interactions.

Alumni-to-alumni interactions are facilitated with social activities, including meeting with old classmates and opportunities for networking. The interactions are usually formalised into events, such as reunions or networks, part of an annual cycle of events. The initiatives focus on participation, even engaging alumni themselves in organising activities for the benefit of the individual, with little net benefit for the institution. The cycle may end here; an alumnus may participate in university events

and avail himself of institutional services for decades with the relationship remaining static. The aim of the institution is to nurture these individual relationships over a lifetime thus creating a large number of loyal, active and committed alumni.

4.2.4 Building Alumni Relationships with IA: Support

Muller (1986) describes this support stage as 'action' (p.20). From the self-interest aspect of engagement, support is the altruistic phase. At this stage it is the institution yielding the ultimate benefit from the relationship. Portera (2002) argues alumni support is powerful, revealing 'graduates as advocates' (p.1) with the potential to make a difference to the institution through government relations, fundraising efforts, building on new relationships and student recruitment. Support enables alumni to make a meaningful gesture to the university as a student mentor, participating in university governance or becoming a donor. This relationship cycle becomes the output that generates a greater outcome for the institution— an enhanced university for current and future students along with a resource to the wider community.

An alumna's dedication to an institution's mission and values is legitimised through a donation or through participation that brings about change for the institution. Webb (1993) describes this support by alumni as a 'lifetime of service' (p.303). By donating time or money to the institution, alumni are described as the most valuable resource for the university. Traditionally, the development component is responsible for the university's fundraising process, while both development and alumni relations continue to facilitate the relationships with volunteers and donors towards a long-term support.

The support stage is both a quantifiable and qualitative. The IA literature describes techniques to record alumni volunteerism or to segment donations on how recent the donation was made, say in the last year, the frequency of the donation, say

annually, and the value of the donation. Moreover an alumnus profile, with both identified affinity and engagement, displays accumulated warmth towards the institution (Smith 2001) that may then result in a donation. Alumni may also become informal ambassadors, acting as advocates for the institution in the public, expanding the interactions between the alumni and the community. The institution calls alumni to action, based on identified university priorities or adapted needs of the institution. For instance, an institution may invite an alumna to participate in a student recruitment event in their region, or donate to a cause that fits the interests from an alumnus' profile.

“Giving back” is the phrase often used in IA, which I extend in this study to consider the institution-led dynamic and flexible opportunities to the support stage (Sun et al 2007; Simpson 2001; Tromble 1998; Lippincott 2004; Precedent 2009; Fearn 2009a; Fearn 2009b). The support stage leads to interactions, based on the changing needs of the institution, with dynamic relationships sliced in different ways depending on the matching of the alumni profiles to an institution's needs. As a creative process of interactions, the institution aims to build a lifetime of alumni service and support towards the advancement of the institution.

For the individual, the engagement and support is active participation that yields benefit for the individual in the form of an investment in the value of their qualification, a new experience or an expanded network of contacts. Therefore this exercise of “giving back” also gives back to alumni, creating a return at the same time (Muller 1986; Worth 2002; Palfreyman 2007). Creating a critical mass of supporters legitimises the institution to others—alumni, students, prospective students and the general public—producing a strong indication that this mass of

supporters is committed to the institution in dedicating time or money. Thus, this creates a model which would bring merit and even prestige to the institution.

These four stages create a full cycle of building alumni relationships with IA practice. Support is not the end of the cycle. As the cycle process starts again, it redefines alumni affiliation differently or identifies a different cohort, creating new affinity interactions leading to related engagement and support. At this stage, the university embarks on change that needs to be tested in public, such as creating a new brand identity, announcing a fundraising campaign, or developing a new online community for alumni. These new initiatives are then adopted into the cycle, to build relationships in the context of these new parameters. Ideally, as the cycle rotates there are new affiliated publics, and also those alumni that have provided support through volunteering or donations begin to contribute in a different way to the university and progress other alumni through the cycle.

IA illustrates diversity in the actors involved in the process of building relationships. Moreover, the interactions are dynamic with alumni at different stages in the process interacting with other alumni at the same or another stage in the process; with an individual alumna progressing or stagnating at a particular stage in the relationship process (Lippincott 2004). Some alumni may withdraw from the process altogether, while the IA offices attempt to find ways to get these individual re-engaged with the institution. The challenge to IA professionals is the complexity of the large, organic and demographically diverse system stemming from an ever-expanding alumni population.

4.3 *Ollscoil* and IA: Building Alumni Relationships

IA practice plays a major role in initiating interactions between alumni and other University actors, leading to *Ollscoil* building relationships with alumni. From a distance, *Ollscoil* is following an international IA formula and practice. Upon

closer inspection, the University applies IA practice primarily as an affinity-building tool. The research suggests IA practice at *Ollscoil* has scarce resources, including limited personnel, compared to American or UK counterparts.

4.3.1 IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Affiliation at *Ollscoil*

The case study vignette of the *Ollscoil* graduation shows the first step for students joining the alumni community. Although this event is outside the remit of concerted IA activity, the conferring shows *Ollscoil* using IA practice. For example, the AAO extended a welcome to the newest alumni with an advertisement on the back of the conferring booklet, an attempt to have these alumni identify themselves and consider interacting with the University. The experience at the institution and ultimately receiving the parchment provide the lifelong link between the individual with *Ollscoil*, as well as the ceremony itself, based on formal interactions between graduands and the academic community. With a limited number of universities in Ireland, the alumni of *Ollscoil* do affiliate themselves with the institution as it is perceived to hold value in the wider community: from the positive reputation for its academic programmes to employers hiring graduates from *Ollscoil* because it is also their own *alma mater* (Interview- SUP-ID6; *Ollscoil* Document 50).

Students are a measurable group. *Ollscoil* has a student database to segment students in many ways: by region, area of study, year of study. *Ollscoil* maintains a database of students, the alumni of the future, as they progress through the University system. The information is collected, not only for current use but also because, upon graduation, the information transfers to the new alumni database. The permanent address of students, for instance, is useful for long-term contact with alumni. Therefore, the students' affiliation with *Ollscoil* is performance-driven towards completing a qualification. Moreover, the IA offices want to collect as much student contact information as possible to build individual profiles upon graduation. To

attend conferring, the graduand provides robust personal information to register for the ceremony, information updated for future contact.

This alumni information is centrally held and controlled; only the IA offices have direct access to the information and other University departments request alumni data through the IA offices. Thus, the IA offices hold the responsibility to update individual alumni records and produce alumni statistics. This demographic profile and statistical information on the whole active alumni cohort informs and steers the work of the IA offices, especially the AAO. *Ollscoil* acknowledges alumni as equal members of the University community along with other affiliated groups, such as students and staff (*Ollscoil* Document 10).

Ollscoil also has “lost alumni”; I noted the stacks of alumni magazines in the corner of the Alumni Affairs Office marked ‘return to sender’ (Field Notes, FN-08). Limited resources restrict the AAO’s ability to follow-up on these ‘lost alumni’ and the activity is not prioritised. *Ollscoil* concentrates on active alumni, appealing to this group to help locate and identify the whereabouts of alumni friends gone astray from the alumni database.

Ollscoil also extends affiliation to honorary graduates. This is a strategically created affiliation, initiated by the institution, to a person of local, national or international distinction or to bestow an honour to someone with a notable contribution to society. This opens new interactions based on an artificially constructed (albeit creative) affiliation gained—not by fulfilling degree requirements— through a special conferring ceremony. The interactions between these honorary alumni and the senior management and academics are observed as being very strong (*Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 11). Thus, the IA

offices steer these interactions towards establishing a lifelong relationship between the honorary graduate and *Ollscoil*.

The output to the affiliation stage is the concerted critical mass of alumni who, by virtue of conferring, all have a common link to the institution. The alumni database is the instrument used to collect alumni data. The IA offices set the parameters of alumni-institution interactions to collect and develop alumni information. The AAO takes the lead in collecting this data, creating a snapshot of the whole alumni community that sets a foundation for first-order governance. This opens opportunities for *Ollscoil* to segment alumni, approach and educate this cohort on IA practice and on the priorities of the institution at the initial stage of building relationships. The evidence points to an standardisation in alumni interactions with IA offices, such as sending the alumni magazine to all alumni. On the other hand, the IA offices recognise that an alumnus possesses multiple *Ollscoil* affiliations—by academic programme of study, by graduation year, for instance—thus decentralising and personalising alumni interactions for future development.

To set the conditions for such interactions under second-order governance, the IA offices transfer student information to the alumni database. The AAO strategy is to raise awareness with the newest graduates of their connection to *Ollscoil* and of their alumni status. The senior management endorsed the importance of alumni affiliation setting the conditions for the lifelong relationships building process, with the approval to acquire the alumni database, discussed later in this chapter.

4.3.2 IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Affinity at *Ollscoil*

The AAO begins by building affinity with students by educating students on the very concept of alumni with the intention to extend the student experience into a lifelong *Ollscoil* relationship. The interactions between the IA offices and students includes: a booth at clubs and societies day and a section in the student handbook.

For wider interactions with the future alumni, the AAO and Alumni Association established relations with the Students' Union including the recent appointment of the Students' Union President as a member of the Alumni Association Board. Moreover, the Alumni Association sponsors awards for student societies to raise awareness of the term alumni, as well as awareness of the Association itself and its value to future alumni. The student-alumni mentorship programme (*Ollscoil* Doc 25), along with the student send-off programme, that is, contacting alumni from a region to meet with new students starting at *Ollscoil* to 'send them off to the University' (*Ollscoil* Doc 5, 8) are two good examples of the AAO programmes to build affinity with students.

The IA offices set an example for the rest of the institution on the importance of building relationships with students for *Ollscoil*. The University Foundation informs students in welcome packs that the new recreation centre is funded through both a student levy and also from private donations (Interview- DD-ID2, 16). This strategy, controlled by IA offices, informs, educates and involves students early in IA practice so they are prepared and familiar with IA after graduation. While these IA offices cannot control the student experience, evidence suggests that the Student Services Office at *Ollscoil* have adopted a relationship-building ethos, applying IA principles, such as creating their own Office brand. *Ollscoil* Career Services also engage alumni to assist in building student affinity with the institution by producing alumni career profiles for current students to access in exploring their own career path and arranging alumni employers to recruit new graduates (*Ollscoil* Document 24). Thus, *Ollscoil* sets a foundation for affinity in the institution from future alumni.

The purpose of marketing and communications practice at *Ollscoil* is cited as building relationships with the wider community, including alumni (Interview-

CMM-ID2). The new CMU controls the University's image portrayed externally, to carefully and strategically develop *Ollscoil's* public image. Research conducted by the University suggests *Ollscoil* holds a reputation as a social campus as part of a vibrant urban community (Ibid.). The establishment of the new CMU coincided with the development of the University's Strategic Plan along with ambitions to improve *Ollscoil's* position in the international university rankings. With the desire to show *Ollscoil* as a superior academic institution, the recruitment of students now extends beyond the traditional catchment areas. The decision to recreate the University's image started at senior level, delegated to the IA office for control and management, then went to the CMU for monitoring (Interview- CMM- ID2). This new *Ollscoil* image is adhered to in other IA offices controlling the types of alumni events and stories in the alumni magazine, for instance, to reflect this agreed image.

Moreover, the *Ollscoil* image impacts the student-institution relationship. The evidence suggests that the *Ollscoil* brand in promotional materials and *Ollscoil* merchandise, such as t-shirts, is designed with students and prospective students in mind. Although the CMU is not directly involved in student enrolment, the IA offices are involved in steering the *Ollscoil* marketing strategy, such as changing the date of Open Day. This IA practice presents opportunities for student-institution interactions by steering the *Ollscoil* message and visual identity portrayed at *Ollscoil* events, setting a tone for such interactions. The CMU is accountable to senior management on the marketing strategy linked to enrolment performance.

The data points to the frequent use of "we" and "us" in the *Ollscoil* discourse, implying the institution, the alumni and the wider public share the institution's vision. Therefore, building relationships begins with IA communications- a brand, values, and messages that reflect the direction of the

institution. It is through the IA work that this vision comes to life and has impact to steer opinion. Affinity is emotive; the onus is on the individual alumnus whether they feel any affinity to the institution.

The role of alumni relations is described as ‘a way to keep the blood flowing through the alumni network, so that graduates have the opportunity to engage with each other and the University’ (Interview- MAA-ID4, 1). For instance, the alumni magazine is sent to all alumni to provide an update on the University, to highlight success stories, to celebrate *Ollscoil* accolades and ‘to be proud of fellow alumni’ (Ibid.) It is anticipated that through building the *Ollscoil* media profile, the alumni magazine and other widely distributed publications, that an affinity with the institution develops with alumni and other external stakeholders. The affinity credit card, so aptly named, is another way the University hopes to build this affinity concept with the students, the alumni and others who carry this special credit card that connects them to the institution (*Ollscoil* Document 9).

The intention for IA communications is to spark unforgettable “remember when” moments for the alumni. The alumni magazine also provides a class notes section, inviting alumni to share their personal updates since graduation with the wider alumni community. From significant scientific research to sports team results, the alumni magazine also reports on a variety of seemingly unrelated topics, with *Ollscoil* as the common denominator. This publication attempts to appeal to a wide range of alumni: various ages, backgrounds, geographic areas and interests. The publication also includes a myriad of topics that would foster affinity in the alumni reader: reporting on recent developments in cancer research, highlighting the profiles of alumni Olympians, promoting the new and innovative postgraduate study options, celebrating the achievements of Alumni Award winners (*Ollscoil* Document 14).

Alumni are also invited to register and receive updates from the student societies of interest. Thus begins an exchange: the alumnus receives information on an area he is particularly fond of and contacts the University; the AAO records this interest for future interactions, such as support to the particular student society or an event related to this affinity (*Ollscoil* Doc 51). In most cases however, *Ollscoil* is not aware of an individual's personal affinity to the institution and builds individual profiles on perceived affinity such as graduating year, topic of study or geographic location. The combination of affinities on an individual's alumni record on the database leads to segmented contact: an invitation to London event or newsletter from a particular academic department.

The output of IA practice is an image of *Ollscoil* as a dynamic institution to alumni, with the aim that these achievements and updates conjure up pride, nostalgia and affinity for the institution. The alumni community may be already connected to the institution by graduation. Despite the perception of the positive student experience, the AAO is aware that not all alumni necessarily hold any affection for *Ollscoil*, or any general interest in the work of the institution. The aim of the affinity stage is promoting the institution to alumni through communications and marketing and facilitating it through both the CMU and AAO. The output is unmeasurable—it is not possible to deem whether an alumnus has affinity to *Ollscoil*.

The communications to alumni remain broad and are only targeted as natural groups are slowly identified, such as past members of a particular student sports team. *Ollscoil* is beginning to add these specific affinities to the alumni database. As this profiling work increases, the IA offices have intentions of creating more targeted communications in particular areas that would yield a closer affinity in bringing back nostalgic feelings and positive memories of student days. The IA offices cannot

measure the impact of affinity and the data suggests that the IA personnel are happy that the message *Ollscoil* portrays is communicated effectively to alumni.

The IA practice is a formal instrument to address the affinity stage, based on a University design code and understood priorities for the institution. So while the interactions with alumni are information based and 'soft' instruments of interaction, the basis for designing the information is closely monitored and created by *Ollscoil* IA offices. The image of *Ollscoil* is significant as is demonstrated by the work of the AAO and CMU to interact with "alumni stories" that contribute to steering the image of the institution in the University's desired direction.

Although the interactions at the affinity level tend to be one-way—*Ollscoil* outwards to alumni—the aspects first-order governance are noticeable. The IA offices are presenting an updated, exciting and contemporary image of *Ollscoil*, to an audience that may not have stepped onto campus in decades. The aim is that informing the diverse alumni community on the *Ollscoil* of today will replace or solve the problems of an old or unsuitable vision or reputation for the institution. Thus the alumni would gain a new understanding of *Ollscoil* as a superior and important Irish university with high standards commanding the highest respect and recognition both in the national and international scene.

Alumni are presented with a consistent image of *Ollscoil*. The IA offices express hope that the alumni identify with this University image, sustain interest in the University's affairs, and associate themselves as proud *Ollscoil* graduates (Interview- MAA-ID4; Interview- CMM-ID2). Moreover, to appeal to a diverse alumni group there are both generic publications to establish affinity and specifically targeted ones. Common to all these communications are the discourse of open invitations and opportunities for alumni, providing a plethora of ways for alumni to

participate or find out more information on this affinity. The publications balance reminiscing in the past with alumni gatherings and *Ollscoil* achievements that show the dynamic direction of the institution. The IA communications are the means to get the complex *Ollscoil* message across, outlining second-order governance: setting the conditions for alumni-institution interactions.

4.3.3 IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Engagement at *Ollscoil*

The research suggests that *Ollscoil* presumes that alumni hold a natural affinity with the institution, with the friends made, with the social life and with the positive academic experience. As an outside observer, I see the quality of alumni engagement focused primarily on social endeavours such as alumni reunions. The phrase from an advertisement targeted to students confirms this assertion: 'The Alumni Association helps people like you maintain links with one another—for pleasure, for business or just for the chance to relive those times' (*Ollscoil* Document 25, p.128). The positive student experience infers alumni already have a network of friends and to preserve this affinity, alumni events and initiatives are offered to foster this network and expand potential to links with the institution.

Engagement is the beginning of two-way interactions between the institution and alumni. The findings suggest the alumni magazine is a key conduit for initiating an active communication process. On the surface, the alumni magazine is a one-way communication from the University outwards. Underneath there is alumni participation in writing the articles, suggesting content along with several invitations to engage alumni in IA initiatives. The magazine also builds nostalgia, by reporting on class reunions, or the Memories Project, whereby alumni recount their *Ollscoil* experiences for the University's archive project (*Ollscoil* Document 5). Moreover, the Alumni Association Web site reads 'help us find lost alumni' requesting this engagement directly from the alumni (*Ollscoil* Document 5; Field Notes, FN-03), or

asking alumni to provide an update to publish in the class notes section at the back of the publication (*Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 12).

The AAO provides events, and 'platforms for communications' (Interview-MAA-ID4, 1) demonstrating the crucial role of the office in building relationships. Alumni engagement is based on interest, motivation of alumni along with the ability to participate in an IA-organised event. The Alumni Awards event, for example, claims to be a networking opportunity for all alumni. In reality, the Alumni Awards event remains exclusive to a select group of alumni (Field Notes, FN-03; Interview-AGA-ID8). The alumni nominated are accomplished alumni, and the interactions between senior management and faculty is familiar. The event is well attended by senior management and academic faculty, providing an opportunity for these individuals to network and socialise with this select group of alumni. By reporting on the outcome of the Alumni Awards in the alumni magazine, the event then has wider appeal, informing the whole alumni community of the success of fellow alumni, in order to rekindle or develop an affinity with the University while noting the alumni are in 'good company' (*Ollscoil* Document 5, p.10).

The regional branches from London to Beijing provide alumni with localised networking opportunities (*Ollscoil* Document 14). Despite the distance between the alumni and the campus, regional branches tend to be alumni-initiated, both in organising regional events, and also in establishing and maintaining the network. *Ollscoil* also consults alumni database for clusters of alumni in a particular region and to identify an active alumna in the region to lead the branch network. Alumni from a city, region or country elect to meet each other focused around social events with a common thread: graduates from *Ollscoil*. The network responsibility is diffused from the AAO to a local alumni representative or committee to organise

events, with the AAO offering funding, support and lists of local alumni. Naturally, alumni friends could meet on their own accord, without University involvement; formal regional branch events allow a wider group of alumni to meet, with two common links: *Ollscoil* and geography.

Social networking sites, offer virtual alumni networking, created and monitored by the AAO (*Ollscoil* Document 14). This interaction, promoted in the alumni magazine and the Web site, is a way for the IA office to interact directly with students and recent alumni, while creating an extensive captive audience of 'Ollscoil friends' numbering in the thousands (*Ollscoil* Document 5). This is another example of tailoring interactions for certain demographics, in this case more recent alumni and students, who are already using social networking sites to have a direct interface with the University. Discussion forums allow for alumni-student and alumni-alumni interactions, while the AAO has a captive audience to promote initiatives.

Engagement at *Ollscoil* also poses challenges. The change from a paid Alumni Club to an Alumni Association where all alumni are automatically members causes the University some difficulty. The findings suggest the initial disbandment of the Alumni Club a decade ago was handled casually, without the consideration of the implications to the relationship with these Alumni Club members (Interview- MAA-ID4; Interview- AGA-ID8). As a consequence, the AAO leads an operation that re-engages these Alumni Club members with the University (Interview- MAA-ID4). Part of the re-engagement of the Alumni Club members includes formal representation on the Alumni Association Board, and the continuation of separate Alumni Club reunions. It is recognised that the affinity for this alumni cohort with the University is through the defunct society. The initial naïveté by *Ollscoil* of disbanding the Alumni Club with the hopes that by establishing a wide Alumni

Association would translate to donations has not materialised. It is now acknowledged that long-term relationship building with alumni requires a change in culture towards fundraising to ever be realised (Interview-DD-ID2). The AAO is left with managing the damaged interactions with alumni who paid subscriptions to the Alumni Club before initiating any wide-scale alumni fundraising appeals. The President views this matter as serious, allowing the AAO to offer concessions to the Alumni Club members to appease the situation and restore engagement with the institution (Interview- MAA-ID4). The former Club members have a notation on their database record, to ensure interactions with this group are strategic and sensitive, controlled through the AAO. By changing IA practice at *Ollscoil* to provide programming that is more inclusive to all alumni, this decision alienated the alumni engaged in the Alumni Club, requiring years of special attention to repair. By changing the types of interactions the University wanted with alumni to be more universal, the short-term consequence is the impact on the interactions with Alumni Club members, managed by the AAO.

The research also highlights a special class reunion, initiated by an alumna who approached the AAO. The alumna developed a blog for the event and the CMU featured the upcoming reunion as a news item on the Web site. With invitations sent to graduating class, the event gained momentum. The blog displays dozens of photos posted and messages from the alumni in the particular graduating class. The AAO supported the organisation of the event by supplying a class list and identifying a 'star lecturer' from the time to teach a 'mock class' (*Ollscoil* Document 33; Interview- MAA ID6, 2). The AAO uses this alumni-initiated reunion as an example to encourage more of such interactions with the IA office (*Ollscoil* Document 51).

The engagement interactions focus on alumni-alumni or even alumni-student relationships within the confines of what is possible for alumni, limited to geographic areas and interests of alumni. Alumni initiatives are contingent on and sustained by alumni participation. The appeals to alumni to organise reunions or establish regional networks by the AAO give the impression that the resources for such alumni-initiated events are boundless. This wide open invitation leads me to conclude that proactive engagement by alumni to organise events or networks are the exception and not the rule, with a modest number of new alumni-initiated events established over the past few years (Field Notes, FN-03).

The testament to this engagement by alumni is the high attendance at alumni events, with hundreds of alumni in attendance at the annual reunions and dozen of active regional branches hosting regular events. The Alumni Awards event fills a hotel ballroom with alumni, faculty and *Ollscoil* friends in formal black-tie wear, attracting high profile alumni and donors. Across the Atlantic, a similar American Foundation event for alumni and friends is organised, showing that attendees share an interest in keeping a connection with their *alma mater*.

The input of IA practice yields a similar output—alumni engaging in events to socialise with their peers. The leap from alumni reading or informing themselves about the University to participating and involving themselves in *Ollscoil* events or availing of *Ollscoil* services is significant. The AAO tends to run events on an annual cycle, such as reunions every five years (Interview- MAA-ID4), allowing alumni to anticipate and value these events to meet old friends and reminisce. The engagement stage tends to be IA office-led, with isolated examples of alumni-initiated involvement. IA practice is a governance instrument to incite interactions between the institution and the alumni community.

Participation in IA programming provides the IA offices with measurable information and enables the University to build profiles of individual alumni, narrowing their areas of particular affinity. This also enables the IA offices to quantify the success of events, such as participation rates of a graduating class attending an alumni reunion. This information also gives the IA offices the opportunity to steer the direction of their alumni programming to meet interests of alumni, based on past participation and demonstrated interest. The programming organised by the AAO also sets the conditions for the alumni-University interactions, such as the involvement of senior management to attend events or engage in certain protocols. Thus, the interactions at engagement level steer the quality and even quantity of the University-alumni interactions. The IA programming happens on a yearly cycle which means that the interactions from one year to the next are benchmarked, compared and evaluated based on the level of alumni engagement. At this stage in the relationship building cycle, alumni hold power in steering the events, programming and initiatives organised by the University.

4.3.4 IA and Building Alumni Relationships: Support at *Ollscoil*

Support is often perceived as the stage that concentrates on fundraising.

Ollscoil acknowledges that in the Irish context the culture for giving is not comparable to the United States or even the UK (Interview- DD-ID2). *Ollscoil* is slowly emerging and building more sophisticated systems of development, similar to international IA practice. The University Foundation prepares its strategy to be both familiar to an American donor and still inviting for a newer Irish philanthropist or alumni-donor.

The professional school networks, where alumni join to become members for a fee—a donation, through the University Foundation—demonstrates how this affinity with *Ollscoil* is organised through IA practice into opportunities for

engagement towards support: 'The network allows the University to engage with those most successful in the field, creating a significant synergy between those who foster the education ethos and those engaged in the industry and research which has driven Ireland's recent economic success' (*Ollscoil* Document 16, p.2). Leaving aside the question of those who pay for a network considered the 'most successful in the field,' the purpose of the network is as a means for alumni to be consulted and to network for the professional school: 'harnessing the goodwill, contacts, networks and know-how that exists in the academic faculty' (Ibid.). This example demonstrates a linkage between engagement and support: those who engage with the institution also support the institution, in this case, financially, through an annual network donation.

The alumni magazine reported on a news story outlining the need for a new building for an academic department. Mirrored on the opposite page to this story was an appeal to join the accompanying department's professional alumni network. This network is a mechanism to accept donations in exchange for participation in a network channelled exclusively through the University Foundation (*Ollscoil* Document 5), thus creating active donors involved in giving money and in steering the direction of the academic department. The President and senior management are directly involved in interactions with major donors by attending professional network events or meeting donors on a one-on-one. These relationships contribute to bringing about significant change to the institution, moving alumni from active participation to an active agent of the institution.

The University Foundation events also deliver change to the institution. For instance, the annual event of the American Foundation brings together donors who support *Ollscoil* in order to generate further affinity and then match interest to *Ollscoil* priorities. This becomes part of a major gift prospecting process, a

conventional IA formula, designed to gain significant donations to the University. The University Foundation has influence in devising the University's priorities to highlight or emphasise areas that would appeal most to prospective donors. This strategy enables donors to find their 'unique reason to give' (Burnett 1995, p.156). Depending on the size of the donation, the University Foundation has a stewardship plan to indicate to donors how the funding was used responsibly by *Ollscoil* (Interview- DD-ID2). These general stewardship interactions tend to emanate directly from the University Foundation, whereby the President and senior faculty partake in these interactions dealing with significant major donations.

Indirect funding appeals, such as the solicitation in the alumni magazine, speak directly to the potential donor, appealing to their affinity for the institution, with phrases like: 'Yes, I'd like to invest in the future of my university' or 'Your generosity makes a real impact on student life' (*Ollscoil* Document 5, p.7). This untargeted fundraising appeal is an educational process for the general alumni population and is not anticipated to yield a significant return (Interview- MAA-ID4). The generic, untargeted fundraising appeals use the power of persuasion to attempt to convince alumni that giving a donation impacts on the institution while also highlighting how good the individual will feel after the endeavour. Thus, the stewardship for these newest and previously unknown donors is perhaps stronger than would be normal in international practice in order to cultivate these donors for lifelong support to the institution.

I suggest that support at *Ollscoil* goes beyond fundraising to a wider backing of the institution that involves altruistic action on the part of alumni. This kind of support becomes evident in the alumni mentoring programme for students, in the volunteering as an alumni representative on the Governing Authority or Alumni

Association that directly benefits the institution. This is another two-way process with the institution offering opportunities and the onus on the individual alumnus to show support through a donation of money or time. As the institution adapts to the changes in the higher education climate, support offers opportunities to change the institution—new funding participation adapted to *Ollscoil*'s needs, in order to improve and to expand the institution. From the perspective of the institution, the ultimate output to the relationship building cycle is the participation by alumni in supporting the institution.

Ollscoil acknowledges the giving of time is a cornerstone of their new ethos as a campus that supports civic engagement (Interview- OM-ID4; *Ollscoil* Document 36). Despite this ethos, the opportunities for alumni support are disparate, distant from the concentrated IA practice. For example, the opportunity for alumni representation on the Governing Authority is part of central administration, with the AAO involved only in promoting this opportunity to alumni.

Moving on from the support stage, the relationship building cycle continues, transitioning back to affiliation. At this point in the cycle there is an evaluation of the process including a reassessment of affiliation groups to create new or different targets, such as by particular academic unit group, or by graduating class. The aim is to hone this new affiliation towards building affinity, enlisting engagement towards recreating a new area of support by the individual alumnus. For example, an engaged alumna discussed her involvement as the alumni representative on the University Governing Authority and noted that she was subsequently approached by *Ollscoil* to engage in a local regional network, then to participate as a alumni volunteer for regional student recruitment efforts (Interview- AGA-ID8). This example demonstrates how *Ollscoil* targets certain alumni with multiple known identities to

yield different interactions from different University and IA offices to maximise her involvement towards the benefit for the institution.

For *Ollscoil* donors, the link from the support stage back to the affiliation stage concentrates on donor stewardship. The University Foundation develops the most appropriate ways to acknowledge the donations of private benefactors, such as plaques on privately-funded buildings and events with senior management to create opportunities for special donor-University management interactions. Evidence shows that a stewardship system at *Ollscoil* is still in its infancy and the interactions with donors are developed on an individual basis.

The *input* is providing opportunities, through IA offices, to give back to the institution. The *output* from the participation by alumni impacts directly on changing and advancing the institution. The support stage demonstrates first-order interactive governance by presenting the alumni community with the issues facing higher education and the impact or potential impact of these issues on *Ollscoil*. The University's response includes the development of *Ollscoil* priorities in the Strategic Plan and Campus of the Future capital campaign (*Ollscoil* Document 4; *Ollscoil* Document 36). The internal research newsletter, for instance, outlines the need to invest in research facilities, indicating a broad funding base would be required to meet this aim, including private donations (*Ollscoil* Document 20). Across *Ollscoil* there is the initial stages of understanding the value and need for private donations to address some of the challenges facing *Ollscoil*, instead of the reliance on State funding. The University Foundation and *Ollscoil* publications make a soft and indirect appeal to the alumni community for these institution priorities. A second direct appeal is targeted to alumni who have demonstrated an interest, affinity and engagement with the institution, especially in the area for funding support.

The University Foundation acknowledges that the culture of alumni giving is still not common, seeing part of their role in the education of the alumni community on the need for private donations (Interview- DD-ID2). By informing alumni on the successful privately-supported projects that meet the University's ethos, such as the new recreation centre, the IA offices attempt to create the conditions to enable alumni to reach the support stage of the relationship-building cycle.

4.4 Analysis of Outputs: Alumni Relationships and Interactions

The actors involved in the relationship building cycle and the 'qualitative differences of interacting societal entities' (Kooiman 2003, p.232) demonstrate the diversity at *Ollscoil* in the emergence of IA practice. A politician, doctor, recent graduate and poet might only share the affiliation link to *Ollscoil*, formalised through the graduation ceremony. This common thread also transcends generations: alumni at different stages of their lives from early career to postgraduate study, to leadership roles and retirement. With the new alumni database, *Ollscoil* has the potential to collect a wealth of alumni information and segment this data to create cohorts or identify individuals with specific affiliation criteria. At *Ollscoil*, IA is an IA office-driven activity, with passive participation from alumni in providing data to enhance their individual database records. The number of alumni who interact with *Ollscoil* is monitored and steered through known affiliations from the institution outwards. In this section, I synthesise the outcomes of the alumni relationship building cycle through a lens of interactive governance, in particular the tensions of the diverse, dynamic and complex nature of the cycle.

4.4.1 Diversity and Alumni Interactions at *Ollscoil*

The IA offices appeal to a diverse alumni community using communications to build affinity to the widest possible audience. The publications report on current social or political issues in an innocuous but strategic way to minimise the offence

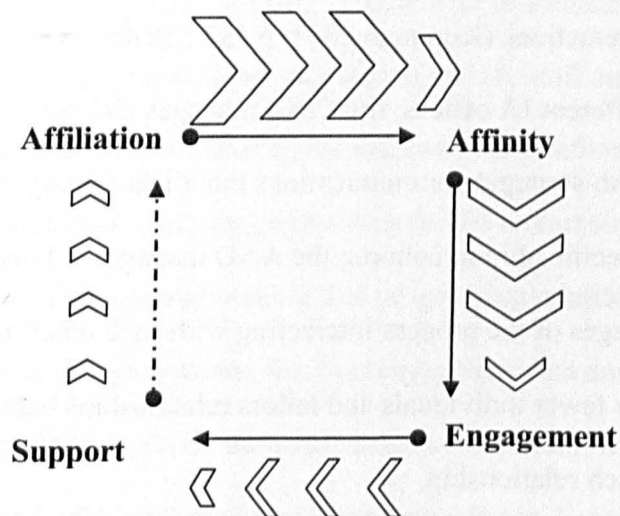
taken by the diverse alumni audience. IA activity and even the alumni magazine, is broadened beyond alumni to include 'friends of *Ollscoil*' (*Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 14) to allow the University to build relationships with those who already have or may gain affinity for the institution.

The same wide appeal is used at both the engagement and support stages, with subtle, qualitative differences on how events, solicitations and support-related initiatives are operated, depending on the target alumni cohort. For instance, many of the regional events are informal, with casual dress and a local alumni representative as host. These regional events focus on relaxed networking, with little direct involvement from the AAO. Conversely, the annual American event targets a prospective or current donor base of alumni and is a black tie event; this cohort of alumni and friends of *Ollscoil* expects attendance by the President and an entourage of senior academic faculty. The American event, however collegial on the surface, is a means to yield donations for the institution. The lead for this event is the University Foundation, not the AAO, demonstrating the link to the support aspect of the cycle. Moreover, those marked on the alumni database as donor prospects are more likely to have a more robust *Ollscoil* profile of affiliations and affinities on their database record of a diversity of interactions than the average alumnus.

As alumni progress through the cycle, the shift in interest and interactions change, becoming more narrow and specialised. At *Ollscoil*, the prompts for these relationships are the IA offices. As an alumna progresses through the relationship building cycle, the focus of interactions becomes sharper, and those involved from a University perspective broadens: from IA offices to academic departments and even involving interactions with the President.

The interactions between alumni and *Ollscoil* are simultaneously universal and personalised depending on the individual alumnus's stage in the cycle. For instance, *Ollscoil* makes both a wide undirected appeal for donations to all alumni through the alumni magazine and at the same time targets particular alumni for specific major donations to the institution. I argue that this tension is between the equality of interactions, where all the interactions by *Ollscoil* are the same and the personal, individual interactions with an alumna is differentiated according to the progress of the individual in the relationship building cycle. Figure 11 demonstrates how the interactions between *Ollscoil* and the alumnus narrow as the relationship progresses:

Figure 11 Diversity of interactions using the IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni



Legend

As the arrow narrows, so does the type of interactions between Ollscoil IA and alumnus/a using IA practice



Equal interactions for all alumni; broad affiliation at Ollscoil



Narrowed, specific and personalised interactions; more concentrated support and loyalty for Ollscoil by alumni

As alumni progress through the cycle facilitated through IA practice, the interactions become more specific and concentrated. Affiliation stage relationships are broad,

with equal treatment for all alumni. As an alumnus moves through the cycle, the IA offices focus on the interactions, providing communication, (e.g. academic department newsletters or sports team updates) as affinities are identified and social interaction (e.g. invitations to reunions or regional events) based on graduating year or location. The relationships become narrow towards the one-to-one interactions with the University Foundation and senior management, for the alumnus who moves from affiliation through the support as a prospective donor. As the interactions become more personalised, in tandem, I suggest the support and loyalty of alumna increases.

4.4.2 Dynamics and the Alumni Interactions at *Ollscoil*

The interactions initiated through IA practice at *Ollscoil* demonstrate elements of dynamism—the convergence and tensions in and between these interactions (Kooiman 2003, p.232). Different relationships are managed through the different IA offices: the CMU manages *Ollscoil's* relationships with the public along with strategic communications materials for targeted relationships, such as with specific alumni cohorts; the AAO manages a dynamic alumni group at different stages of the process interacting with each other; the University Foundation focuses on fewer individuals and tailors relationships based on the philanthropic potential of each relationship.

The outputs of the relationship building process rely on the dynamics between the stages of the process itself and the emergence of IA practice to facilitate this process. So while individual alumni are at different stages, managed by different IA offices, the result is dynamic outputs. The alumna progressing through the cycle gains a greater understanding of the value of alumni relationships for the university and the potential for these relationships to enact change for the institution. This reflects the manner in which interactions are facilitated by IA offices to create or

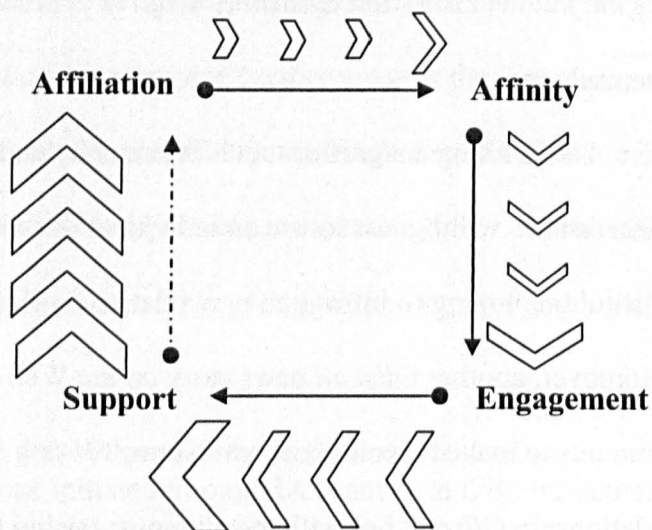
enhance them, without disrupting the individual alumna from progressing from one dynamic interaction to another through the stages of the cycle. Moreover, an alumnus who is supporting *Ollscoil* by acting as a mentor could be mentoring students who are only at the affiliation or affinity stage of the relationship building cycle themselves.

Promoting a significant achievement by an alumna in the media shows the University's willingness to use an individual's positive achievement to promote the institution, hoping to impact on new relationships (*Ollscoil* Document 50). Moreover, another *Ollscoil* news story on the Web site sparked interest by an alumnus to make a donation (Field Notes, FN-03). This changes the type of relationship *Ollscoil* has with the alumnus: raising the awareness to *Ollscoil* on the potential significance of news stories for the advancement of the institution. Interactions between alumni, students, senior administration, staff and faculty are all present in different ways at *Ollscoil* at different stages of the relationship-building process, overlapping and interconnecting depending on the circumstances. The final output is the IA offices' focus of maintaining and progressing relationships with alumni. The interactions change between the University President and a prominent alumnus at the Alumni Awards event; the event becomes a conduit for key interactions to progress a relationship with a prospective donor. Equally, non-personalised solicitation in the alumni magazine sparked a significant donation, which changed the type of relationship the University has with the alumna who made the donation.

The dynamics of interactions relates directly to the relationship-building cycle, moving from interactions that support the status quo of the institution to ones with the potential to bring about change. In Figure 12, demonstrates how as alumni


progress from affiliation through to the support stages, the intention for these interactions goes from preserving the status quo to bringing about change:


Figure 12 Dynamic of interactions using the IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni



Legend

As the arrow widens, the interactions move from the alumni narrow view of the institution and the status quo to a wider broadening of the perspective of the alumni to influence change for the institution


Preserving the status quo at Ollscoil; alumni concentrate on own knowledge, interests and links with Ollscoil


Alumni understand the significance of support to contribute to change and advancement of Ollscoil

In Figure 12 we can see how the alumni relationship changes in the early stages to concentrate on alumni outreach as well as to set the IA infrastructure. This process merely sets the scene, and of itself does not significantly advance the institution, except to bring about new IA activities. As alumni progress through the cycle towards altruistic support for the institution, this also brings about significant change for *Ollscoil*, such as through a major donation or through representation on the governance committees to steer change.

4.4.3 Complexity and Alumni Interactions at *Ollscoil*

With alumni at different stages of the relationship building process, various communities of alumni intersect with each other and with the University stakeholders. As IA practice emerges at *Ollscoil*, the University establishes processes

and systems to augment and manage the complexity of building relationships with alumni.

The new alumni database, allows the AAO and University Foundation access to profile information on individual alumni. The information on the database, however robust on an individual alumnus, is complex and it is only the alumnus who knows which *Ollscoil* affiliation contribute towards initiating a lifelong relationship with the institution. The AAO plans to add information on student affiliations such as Students' Union position, membership of clubs and societies, participation in sports teams. This builds a picture of the alumnus, and the potential affinity to the institution. Adding general affiliation information on an alumna's database record is deemed a lesser priority for the IA offices than focusing efforts on a few prominent and prospective donors. Therefore I suggest that the resource to input vital information on the database is perceived as not necessarily a predictor of future interactions, or even lucrative long-range outcomes for *Ollscoil*. The interactions and individual relationships also overlap, since the limited database at *Ollscoil* does not have the capacity to delve into the complexity of these interactions—thus the ad hoc relationship developing—at *Ollscoil*.

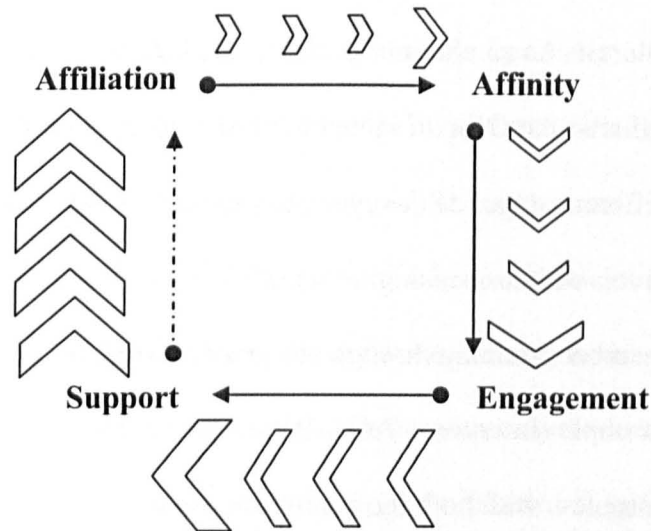
The database is also used to record alumni engagement with the institution, attendance at reunions, for example. This process opens the potential to view interactions, alumnus-alumnus, alumnus-institution, with these interactions overlapping. As the *Ollscoil* and alumnus relationship becomes more personalised, such with a prospective donor, the IA offices begin to track and investigate interactions closely to see how they might play a part in progressing the *Ollscoil* relationship. For instance, noting that an alumna's business colleague or close friend is already an *Ollscoil* donor, enables the University Foundation to decide to

strategically use this external relationship to the University's advantage, with the business colleague taking part in the donation "ask" to the prospective donor friend (Interview-DD-ID2). At *Ollscoil*, these interactions become complex to meet fundraising protocols, such as potential donors wishing to meet the University President or other academic faculty linked to a specific project.

Raising the consciousness and knowledge of the value of IA in the wider faculty of the potential of private fundraising creates its own complexity. The level of joint academic university projects in the recent *Campus of the Future* is in complete contrast to the multitude of single department projects decided during the previous decade. Thus IA has steered internal interactions between academic colleagues towards a streamlined list of capital projects priorities for funding (*Ollscoil* Document 3; *Ollscoil* Document 4).


The synthesis for this section consists in the tension between understanding the complexity and influencing the complexity of alumni interactions to support the institution. I liken this to building the initial stages of the alumni relationships and then to interpreting these affinities, interests and demographic information towards change for the institution. Figure 13 shows how the understanding by *Ollscoil* of an individual alumna, which is initially narrow and limited in scope, broadens towards a greater understanding of her interests, affinities, applied affinities after she engages with the institution. As *Ollscoil* gains a broader scope about the individual as they progress through the cycle, then *Ollscoil* is in a position to influence the alumnus on supporting the needs of institution, based on this understood alumnus' profile.


Figure 13 Complexity of interactions using the IA Relationship Building Cycle with Alumni



Legend

As the arrow widens, so does the understanding of the importance of alumni interactions towards influencing how alumni interact with Ollscoil


Alumni have a narrow understanding of the value of interactions with Ollscoil; focused primarily on self-interest


Alumni understand the importance of alumni-Ollscoil interactions and influence other alumni/students at different stages of building relationship with Ollscoil

The progression of the complexity in interactions is like a painting. At the start, all the same basic materials are available: a canvas, paint, brushes, like the basic profile of an alumna. The painting takes shape with a few tentative sketches of a vision of the institution. Further dimension is added with colour, bringing the sketch of the areas of affinity to life. Finally the richness of the painting is complete with a broad colour range, texture and clear subject to realise the vision. This analogy shows the potential at the start for all canvases to end up as masterpieces. Since *Ollscoil* has limited resources it is only able to create a few works of art.

The complexity is an awareness-raising exercise for *Ollscoil*. The widening of the arrow in Figure 13 coincides with a broadened understanding by *Ollscoil* players and alumni themselves on the merit of alumni interactions to influence the University. At the affiliation stage, alumni start with a narrow understanding of the

purpose or need to interact with *Ollscoil*, focusing primarily on their own self-interest. As an alumnus builds a relationship with his *alma mater*, he begins to see value in the *Ollscoil* interactions and begins to influence other alumni or students, at different stages of the cycle, to progress in their involvement. An alumna directly involved in organising a special class reunion is one example; an Alumni Association member scanning through her graduating class list helps locate lost alumni is another example (Interview- AGA-ID8). The interactions born out of IA practice are complex, with both the institution itself and alumni involved in “making a case”—to use a common IA term—to increase the participation and support by the *Ollscoil* alumni community.

4.5 Summary of IA and Building Alumni Relationships at *Ollscoil*

The four stages of the alumni relationship building cycle are a way to understand the depth and breadth of the IA practice as a means to interact with alumni. At *Ollscoil*, the development of IA systems, events and practice is still in progress. This cycle impacts alumni interactions initiated almost entirely through IA practice. Despite the new and formal nature of building alumni relationships, the interactions serve as both first and second-order interactive governance, emerging to involve a spectrum of actors within the institution.

The evidence confirms that students are exposed to IA through the *Ollscoil* communications materials and through concerted alumni-awareness activities organised by the AAO. Despite these educational initiatives with students, the alumni affiliation begins at *Ollscoil* graduation. After graduation, the newest *Ollscoil* alumni information is transferred from the student database to the alumni database. At this point, the information on the students is confined to contact details, programme of study and year of graduation, with aspirations by the AAO to add other extra-curricular affiliations on individual alumni records as time unfolds and different

events take place. Aside from the graduation, the interactions at the affiliation stage include contacts with various University departments and possibly IA offices. By heightening awareness internally at the University of potential *Ollscoil* affiliations, the aim is to enhance the individual alumni records. The information gathered through IA initiatives sets the stage for future alumni-institution interactions.

At *Ollscoil*, communications is a centrally-controlled practice. To build affinity with alumni is a strategic activity. The information conveyed to the public, and specifically targeted to alumni, such as through the alumni magazine, is to preserve and build a particular image of the university along with educating alumni on customary IA practice. The value placed on alumni by the University is shown by the effort put into carefully marketing and targeting the messages. This stage is the information and education phase; the interactions tend to be one-sided with *Ollscoil* making the efforts outwards to the alumni community early in the relationship-building cycle. As an output, the affinity stage generates a sanitised message of the institution. The alumni magazine, for instance, creates provocative and interesting reading, nothing offensive or too controversial; offering alumni readers with a simple, innocuous, but intriguing view of the institution. The aim is not to offend, as *Ollscoil* recognises that any alumnus may have a potential contribution to make to the institution.

The engagement stage is for alumni-centred outputs: participation in reunions, social activities and services. The alumna elects to take part in initiatives, organised through the IA offices within the parameters of *Ollscoil* resources. Photos from reunions and reports from unique or lively events is the promotion to entice even more alumni to become active in the institution. The ease of participation in social activities—primarily the events organised at the engagement stage—becomes

the natural extension from the vibrant student life. Potentially, the diversity of activities and possibilities for events or initiatives are only bounded by an alumna's interest and enthusiastically organised by the AAO. The *output* is this dynamic university community and network that becomes available after graduation and is exclusive to alumni, but at the same time inclusive, as it is open to all alumni.

Support is the extension and result of engagement. It is through support that contributions are made to the institution. Involvement at *Ollscoil* takes place in the form of volunteerism and philanthropic ventures that bring about change to the institution. The process also brings a sense of pride to the alumni who willingly adopt the values of the institution and become first-hand witnesses to its advancement and progress. The *output* is alumni participation in institution-centred activity. This support for the benefit of the institution is also a means of legitimising the institution by showing the critical mass that supports the expansion of the institution along with preserving the traditions of *Ollscoil*.

Again, the example of the affinity credit card demonstrates the relationship flow clearly: those with a University affiliation are invited to apply for an *Ollscoil*-branded credit card. The alumnus considers their affinity to the University and applies for the credit card. When the alumnus uses the card, which signifies a level of engagement with the University, while also providing a percentage of spend as a contribution back to the University, moving towards the initial stages of support. The credit card brochure also outlines this flow: 'This is an opportunity for individuals to be proud of their University affiliation and financially support them' (*Ollscoil* Document 9, p.2). Moreover, this example points to various interactions: alumni and the IA office; IA office and the partnering organisation (bank); University management and alumni; alumni and the community. As a result, an IA initiative has

gained the power to steer interaction and change the interactions between university actors thus progressing the alumni-institution relationship to have a direct impact on the institution.

The evidence in the *Ollscoil* case study demonstrates the incidence of building relationships as an output from the establishment of IA practice at the University. IA concentrates on building relationships with alumni in order to gain support for the institution. Relationships at *Ollscoil* are across the spectrum, from building affiliation to generating support, explored in greater detail as the outcomes in the next chapter. Kooiman (2003) summarises this as: 'governing can be considered as the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as contexts for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities' (p. 4). The progress of building relationships with alumni is not an end in itself, as it incorporates vital underlying benefits for the individual and the institution. These benefits are not mutually exclusive, they complement one another: if the individual acquires success, this reflects well on the institution and vice-versa. The next chapter focuses on the outcomes to building relationships and analyses the extent to which IA practice, because of this benefit, is a given in the institution.

[The Alumni Association acts] ...as a focal point in building on the strong ethos of loyalty and affection that graduates of Ollscoil possess for their alma mater, thereby promoting advocacy and generating support for the programmes and activities of the university.

Ollscoil senior manager, describing the aim of the Alumni Association (Ollscoil Document 5, p.6).

Chapter 5 Outcome: IA and Relationship Building at Ollscoil

Summertime on campus is quiet, the students, staff and faculty are enjoying their holidays. *Ollscoil* is rejuvenated briefly during this sleepy period and getting ready for the annual alumni reunion. Thousands of alumni are invited to the event, by virtue of their graduating year: ten, twenty, twenty-five, thirty or even fifty years ago. Over 500 alumni accept the invitation and attend the Alumni Weekend. The Student Centre, a building unfamiliar to most of these graduates as it has been extended and refurbished in recent times, is the epicentre of activity. A long red carpet extends from the entrance of the Centre to the registration desk and it is unclear if this is meant to welcome the alumni as important guests to campus or as a safeguard against wet weather. The plan for an outdoor BBQ proves to be successful, as clusters of former classmates eat from the gourmet grill. The IA personnel remains stationed at registration tables to sell University merchandise, while the President and academic faculty—some celebrating their own honoured year of graduation—mingle through the crowd. The Alumni Affairs Office (AAO) have organised campus tours, including a bus tour to highlight to alumni the vast development that has taken place at the institution, from its humble beginnings, to the sophisticated modern campus.

A special ceremony for alumni celebrating fifty years since graduation is a separate affair. These honoured graduates receive a specially designed certificate

with a painting of the oldest campus building in the corner, personalised with their name, graduation year and signed by the President. One by one the graduates are called to the stage for individual photos, with a senior University official presenting the certificates. Photos and memorabilia from the *Ollscoil* archives are displayed on boards along the side of the ornate room are greatly admired by graduates and their guests after the ceremony.

At the main reunion event, the socialising takes place primarily in class groups, suggested by the dozens of photos posted on the Alumni Web site, capturing the jovial atmosphere. The invitation reads: 'The reunion is a wonderful opportunity to revisit the University, renew old acquaintances and see how *Ollscoil* has developed over the years' (*Ollscoil* Document 38). The invitation also suggests anticipation for the event by stating: 'This annual event is driven by demand from our alumni, who want the perfect opportunity to catch up with old friends' (Ibid.). The event unfolds indeed as the perfect opportunity— rekindling old friendships, while, at the same time, renewing the relationship with the institution.

The reunion photos on the Web site reveal an *Ollscoil* phenomenon: the reunions can easily be mistaken for a social event held by staff and faculty (Interview AGA-ID8). The claim seemed innocuous but as I delved deeper into the data I realised that, from the President, to professors, to administrators and to researchers, the number of alumni working at *Ollscoil* is remarkable. Some reunion guests attend the event with this dual identity: an alumnus meeting with peers while also serving the institution as an administrator. The event evokes a sense of familiarity and community. When building relationships with alumni, there is an alumni cohort that has never left campus. Staff members engage happily at alumni events since they provide an extra personal connection with alumni who left campus upon graduation

and pursued other successful endeavours. The affinity for the institution is strong, among students, staff and alumni. The staff members who hold the two identities become an invaluable investment for the institution as they are the educators of the next generation of researchers, academic staff, support service staff and managers. IA practice, especially communications to alumni, has become an enabler for rekindling and fostering this connection, coming full circle. The evidence also suggests generations of the same families go to the University, join the same clubs, participate in the same student events and meet the same professors who graduated themselves from *Ollscoil*: and the cycle continues.

There is a nominal cost to attend the reunion, while the AAO invests significant time and expense in hosting the event: What is the benefit of the event for *Ollscoil*? With two main alumni reunions per year, along with a dozen regional events, across the nation and the globe, bringing graduates together, at what cost and to what benefit? In this chapter, I will discuss the outcomes of IA practice at different stages of the alumni relationship-building cycle, emphasising the benefit of these outcomes and their impact on and for *Ollscoil*.

5.1 Outcomes: Constructing the Analysis

With the emergence of IA practice at *Ollscoil* as the input and the alumni relationship- building cycle as the output, this chapter analyses the outcomes of building these alumni relationships. The analysis is divided into two parts. First, the outcomes generated from the case study findings as they are clustered under each stage of the relationship- building process. Second, at each stage, certain themes emerge and are honed to create a spectrum of two poles, indicating the parameters of outcomes of applying IA to build relationships with alumni at each stage.

The second part of the analysis applies interactive governance to outcomes. A reflection on this cybernetic model is explored through meta-governance,

described by Kooiman (2003). Meta-governance, or third-order governance, is the ‘...creation of a normative base for strengthening a particular resource or favouring the use of certain (sets of) instruments’ (Kooiman 2003, p.47). I suggest that meta-governance is a heuristic device to analyse the extent IA is embedded in the *Ollscoil* system and how the device creates the conditions for normative alumni relationships to surface. Moreover, meta-governance is an opportunity to look at the entire system in its totality, including the elements of IA as *input* (first-order governance) and *output* (second-order governance) towards the *outcomes* discussed in this chapter.

Meta-governance also divulges the outcome spectrums formed from the analysis. That is, two poles outlining the range of outcomes that take place at each relationship-building stage. The purpose for using these factors of interactive governance is to synthesise interactions for the overall relationship building cycle, demonstrating the role of IA practice in this process.

5.2 Outcome of Building Alumni Relationships at *Ollscoil*

A broad theme from the research is the newness of IA practice at *Ollscoil*.

The inputs of IA practice are only beginning to yield some of the outputs of building relationships from the early stages of the cycle, outlined in the previous chapter.

Building relationships is not an end in itself. The time and resources to build this relatively new IA infrastructure is to serve as a long-term advantage for the institution. Therefore, the outcomes reported are a combination of observations and recorded findings from alumni relationships with *Ollscoil*. In other cases, the evidence of outcomes is extrapolated from what is reported by *Ollscoil* as either perceived, anticipated or desired outcomes. Even a year after gathering my case study data, I observed, through anecdotes, accrued benefits from IA practice and alumni relationships, including positive outcomes for the institution (Gallo 2009, August 14; *Ibid.*, October 2).

5.2.1 Affiliation and Outcomes for *Ollscoil*

Student enrolment and retention are both top priorities for *Ollscoil*

(Interview- CMM-ID4; *Ollscoil* Document 22; *Ollscoil* Document 36; *Ollscoil* Document 1; Field Notes, FN-04). These priorities provide a net result for the alumni community: the more students are attracted to study and supported in their studies at *Ollscoil*, the larger the alumni community affiliated to the institution. To attract prospective students to *Ollscoil*, the Communications & Marketing Unit (CMU) devised a carefully constructed University picture. This University image is created by combining the *Ollscoil* reputation for providing a positive student experience and the academic rigour of programmes as reflected through accounts of graduates' successes. The IA-initiated communications strategy sets the tone for the interactions between the prospective student and the University. Prospective students develop expectations about the University and its programmes, shaped by the targeted publications and Open Day the main student recruitment event (Field Notes, FN-04; Field Notes, FN-03; *Ollscoil* Document 19; *Ollscoil* Document 25). Vibrant colours, modern typeface and real student testimonials permeate throughout publications directed at prospective students (*Ollscoil* Document 19; *Ollscoil* Document 40; *Ollscoil* Document 41; *Ollscoil* Document 45; Field Notes, FN-03). The CMU, which controls *Ollscoil*'s public image, balances the youthful look with an informative, persuasive tone designed to influence prospective students, along with their parents and guidance counsellors, to select *Ollscoil* as their university.

Do the prospective students see themselves at *Ollscoil*? Do they fit into and ascribe to the *Ollscoil* culture as they perceive it? *Ollscoil*'s communication messages are aimed to attract the well-rounded and academically strong students. From the IA office perspective, involvement in student recruitment is a long-term investment for the University (Interview- DD-ID6, 8). The findings suggest that the

institution focuses significant resources in student recruitment as the initial stages of University affiliation (Interview- CMM-ID4, 3). While this process enhances recruitment activity and addresses the competition for students in the wider sector, *Ollscoil*, as already mentioned, also focuses on the high quality of prospective students, with the hope that these would become the students who will frequent *Ollscoil* and graduate from the University.

To support student retention and enhance the student experience, the AAO organises an alumni-student mentor programme, while the Alumni Association funds student clubs and societies (Interview- MAA-ID4; *Ollscoil* Document 28; *Ollscoil* Document 29; *Ollscoil* Document 30). The University Foundation also obtained an alumni donation to fund a student counselling service (Interview DD-ID2) and arranged the alumni fundraising appeal for student bursaries (*Ollscoil* Document 14). In addition to the student retention benefits of these initiatives, alumni participating as volunteers and donors show themselves to have engagement and support to the current *Ollscoil* students, normalising this after-graduation involvement to future alumni.

On the surface, the outcomes to these retention initiatives are altruistic, a means of supporting students to complete their studies. The involvement of IA suggests an alternative and complementary outcome: the retention of students expands the alumni base and thus attempts to control the quality and quantity of students-turned-alumni affiliated to the institution. IA is the catalyst for these overlapping and intersecting interactions between students and alumni, prospective students and staff, staff and students. The IA offices, by anticipating these interactions, will contribute to maximising the graduate completion rates, acknowledging it is easier to initiate relationships with graduates already exposed to

positive alumni interactions (Interview- DD-ID2; Interview- CMM-ID6; *Ollscoil* Document 4). The findings also suggest the IA offices hope that the organising of student initiatives builds awareness of the discourse related to IA and Alumni Association and creates a smooth transition to understanding their lifelong affiliation to *Ollscoil*.

The conferring ceremony formalises a graduate's affiliation to *Ollscoil* for life. While graduates may not know one another, they have the common bond of a graduating class—the basis of their University affiliation. By segmenting and celebrating graduates by qualification, the University begins to diversify interactions with the newest alumni. The AAO informs these individuals about this lifelong relationship through a 'welcome to the alumni community' advertisement on the back of the conferring brochure (*Ollscoil* Document 35; *Ollscoil* Document 42; *Ollscoil* Document 43). The basic outcome to this process is the IA offices control the message and set the expectations with graduates on the types of interactions to anticipate as alumni.

Honorary graduates acquire an instant affiliation to *Ollscoil*. The result is a customised group of honorary graduates, with a special *Ollscoil* relationship, who are inclined to develop a long-standing relationship with their adopted *alma mater*. *Ollscoil* benefits from these distinctive affiliations of international dignitaries, business moguls and cultural icons. These individuals often attract national and international media attention, generating the University's desired public profile (*Ollscoil* Document 69; *Ollscoil* Document 12; Field Notes, FN-03). The honorary conferring ceremony is a separate event which involves the interactions of an exclusive group of senior management along with a selective group of alumni and friends. These honorary graduates are lauded as the personification of *Ollscoil* values

(*Ollscoil* Document 12). The broadcast, through IA-organised communications, of the prestigious profiles of honorary graduates to the wider University community will hopefully result in having the alumni and the community identify with and feel proud of their own *Ollscoil* affiliation (*Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 12). Thus, the institution awards the honorary degree in exchange for the future affiliation of the recipient, a relationship the University anticipates will progress through the alumni relationship-building cycle.

Changing the official name of *Ollscoil* about a decade ago also impacts outcomes of alumni affiliation, since older alumni attended the University under a different name. Subtle references to *Ollscoil*'s original name are reported in the data, albeit rarely, usually referring to the institution in historical terms (*Ollscoil* Document 12; Interview MAA- ID4). The *Ollscoil* design manual, managed by the CMU, reminds the University community that only the current *Ollscoil* name is used in *Ollscoil* publications (*Ollscoil* Document 70; *Ollscoil* Document 13). To enable the older alumni population to recognise their affiliation to *Ollscoil*, correspondence to alumni tends to begin with the salutation: 'Dear *Ollscoil* Graduate' and within the first sentence *Ollscoil* is mentioned again, allowing alumni to infer their own link to the "new" institution (*Ollscoil* Document 12; *Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 27; *Ollscoil* Document 48; *Ollscoil* Document 49; *Ollscoil* Document 50; *Ollscoil* Document 51). The outcome is the University's attempt to standardise the University name, consistently applied internally and externally. By almost erasing the existence of the old University name, the CMU insists that all alumni be addressed by their *Ollscoil* affiliation. Even the fiftieth reunion celebration outlined in the vignette consists of references to the use of the present *Ollscoil* name (*Ollscoil* Document 12; Field Notes, FN-03). This has reduced the complexity of alumni

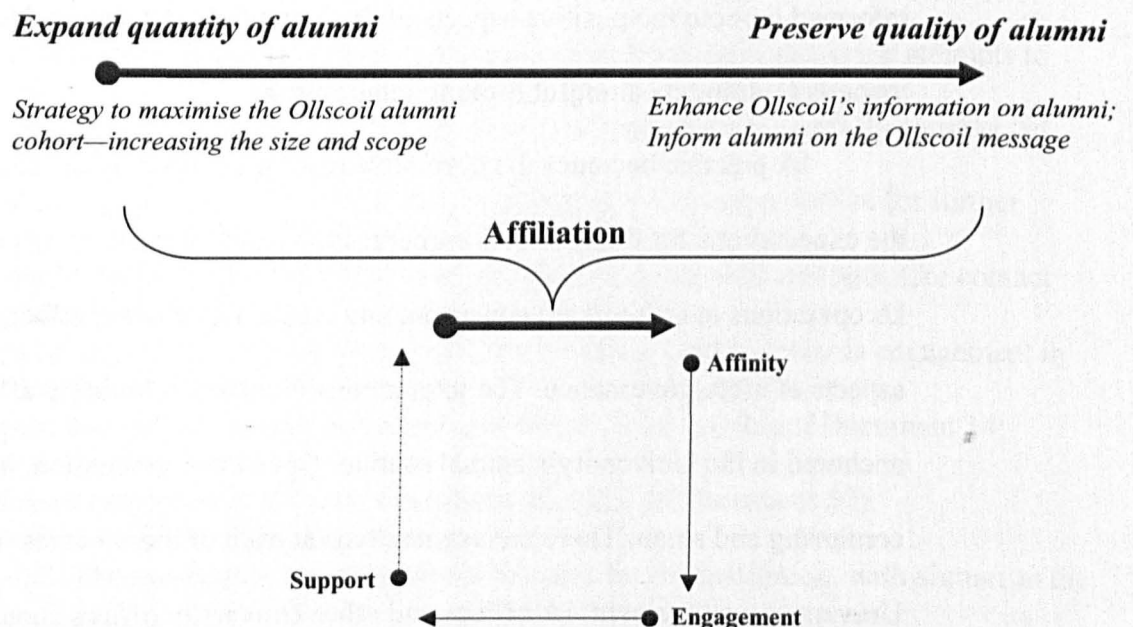
affiliations, encouraging all alumni to affiliate themselves and interact with the institution under the current name. This educates alumni to use the institution's name themselves, thus reinforcing a consistent use of *Ollscoil* title to the public.

To organise over 50,000 alumni records, the AAO acquired an off-the-shelf alumni database, 'recognised as the gold standard in educational advancement' (*Ollscoil* Doc 12, p.6). The purchase of this database signals the awareness among senior management that the alumni cohort has the potential to positively impact the institution over the long-term. The database is reactive, recording existing interactions and contacts between an individual alumnus and the University. By strategically segmenting alumni by affiliation and recorded affinity, the database is also proactive with the potential to strategically progress alumni towards IA initiatives of engagement and support. These interactions, like the alumni database itself, are a conduit towards greater outcomes. In an open memorandum to the internal *Ollscoil* community, the AAO made a case for the alumni database, demonstrating the benefits for the institution: by fostering alumni advocates; by attracting further students to *Ollscoil*; by identifying alumni mentors for current students and by establishing a captive audience of alumni for adult and continuing education (*Ollscoil* Doc 22). Alumni are presented as a useful resource for the institution, and the alumni database is acclaimed as a means to foster the initial affiliation to yield and maximise the potential of this resource. This University treats the database as an investment, indicating that the institution is serious about linking with past students: '[the database] marks a significant step in supporting the achievement of the long-term strategic objectives of both offices [AAO and University Foundation]' (*Ollscoil* Document 12, p.6). This shows the University's commitment to IA as an inherent part of the institution, as well as the anticipated

growth in the alumni cohort and the quality of the relationship the University aims to build with alumni.

Figure 14 illustrates the outcomes of affiliation interactions at *Ollscoil* through IA practice, represented by a continuum. The data suggests the parameters of the two poles are a balance between the outcomes of the quantity and the quality of the alumni cohort. This section deals with the manner by which IA practice mediates between these two extremes in interactive governance to balance the complexity of both quantity and quality of alumni. *Ollscoil* recognises the importance of alumni in the University community. Through IA practice, the institution reflects strategically on the type of student and alumni that would be beneficial for the institution.

**Figure 14 Outcomes of Affiliation Interactions at *Ollscoil*:
Building Relationships with Alumni using IA practice**



The affiliation *outcomes* described at *Ollscoil* aim to balance between expanding the quantity of alumni and preserving the quality of alumni. *Ollscoil* shows a desire for expansion, maximising the alumni cohort, whether that is by student recruitment, by retention, or by honorary graduates along with establishing systems to ensure *Ollscoil* retains accurate contact information for alumni through the new database.

The affiliation with *Ollscoil* is set and understood as a given. The promotion of the new alumni database, such as through the alumni magazine and staff newsletter, illustrates to the wider University audience how normal this IA practice has become for the institution along with becoming an educational tool for alumni and wider University stakeholders.

At the other extreme, quality of alumni includes two main areas. First, we have the maintenance and enhancement of the alumni data held by the alumni database. Second is the role of informing the alumni on the *Ollscoil* name, image and message. Through IA practice, *Ollscoil* is actively working on both aspects of quality at the affiliation stage in order to create a more informed alumni community. By informed I mean the aim of *Ollscoil* affiliation *outcomes* is that alumni become informed on both the positive aspects of the institution and also on IA processes towards building meaningful lifelong relationships.

IA practice becomes the normative instrument used by the University to set the expectations for the type of communications and interactions with *Ollscoil*. The IA operations at *Ollscoil* are consistent and create a normative effect, showing the aspects of meta-governance. The interactions involved in building affiliation are anchored in the University's annual routine: Open Day, graduation, honorary conferring and so on. There are expectations at each of these events on how the University management, IA offices and other University offices should interact with the prospective and current students, with graduates and alumni. However, through this annual cycle, these interactions are taken for granted. Moreover, by creating a familiarity early with students and graduates, there is hope that the University has instilled an implicit understanding of keeping connected with the University by, for instance, encouraging updates on contact details and linking with the *Ollscoil* social

networking site. The aim is for *Ollscoil* to preserve as large a number of alumni as possible within the University's alumni database.

5.2.2 Affinity and Outcomes for *Ollscoil*

Communication with alumni is controlled through IA practice which casts an image of *Ollscoil* as a dynamic and innovative institution; this is the platform for alumni to inform and update themselves on the institution, while gaining pride and loyalty in their *alma mater*. The benefit of this affinity to the institution is two-fold: *Ollscoil* assembles a captive audience for its message; alumni are informed and, in turn, become informal ambassadors for the institution since they are motivated by a personal value of keeping in touch with *Ollscoil*. Building affinity at *Ollscoil* is an ongoing process. The alumni magazine, for example, becomes a broad conduit of *Ollscoil* stories assembled by the IA offices as a message to the alumni and to spark interactions with alumni, while, at the same time the alumni magazine attempts to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. The messages are carefully constructed and conveyed: positive towards the institution and showing potential for further growth. These news stories also offer the alumni reader with prompts, like contact details or a related event to attend in order to entice alumni towards engagement in topics that directly appeal to them (Field Notes, FN-03; *Ollscoil* Document 14; *Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 48; *Ollscoil* Document 50).

The outcome is creating loyal advocates for the institution, with alumni as the largest internal-external public of the University. The better informed the alumna, the better the representative alumna for *Ollscoil* in the wider community. The University has changed since many alumni attended as students. Therefore, the *outcome* is to build affinity in alumni with the current image of the institution, balanced with preserving the vision of the institution many alumni remember and grew fond of in the first place.

The research suggests that the purpose of IA related interactions with alumni is as an internal student recruitment tool, in order that alumni will then consider sending their own children to *Ollscoil* (Interview- DD-ID2)¹⁴. The children of alumni already have an affiliation with *Ollscoil* through their parents, so the next step is to build direct affinity with the institution. IA offices are not responsible for student enrolment, however, IA practice steers this aspect of affinity with prospective students to the institution through communication materials. The outcome is to build family tradition in attending *Ollscoil* by demonstrating a strong belief in what the University can offer, while counteracting the recent decline in student enrolment in traditional catchment areas (Interview- CMM-ID6).

IA practice is also addressing this negative enrolment trend by applying IA practice to involve alumni in regional recruitment efforts. The alumnus becomes the ambassador of the University, and works towards building an affinity with the institution among prospective students from a common region, along with attracting the children of fellow alumni. This strategy provides meaningful and personalised interaction with prospective students. In contrast, as an observer at Open Day, I noted that prospective students had little interaction with people on campus: 'The University promoted on Open Day is the shell—the buildings, the programmes and the facilities. The true heart of the campus is not exposed—the relationships, the friendships, the good experiences—I think it is challenging to demonstrate this interactivity to prospective students in a short visit' (Field Notes, FN-04, 1). The University's reputation of a positive student experience does not come through explicitly from the Open Day event. Therefore, the testimonials and interactions between prospective students with alumni, parents, neighbours and friends who are

¹⁴ All prospective students in Ireland apply to higher education through a nationally-organised Central Admission Office (CAO), thus *Ollscoil* hopes alumni encourage their children to make *Ollscoil* their first choice of institution on their CAO application form.

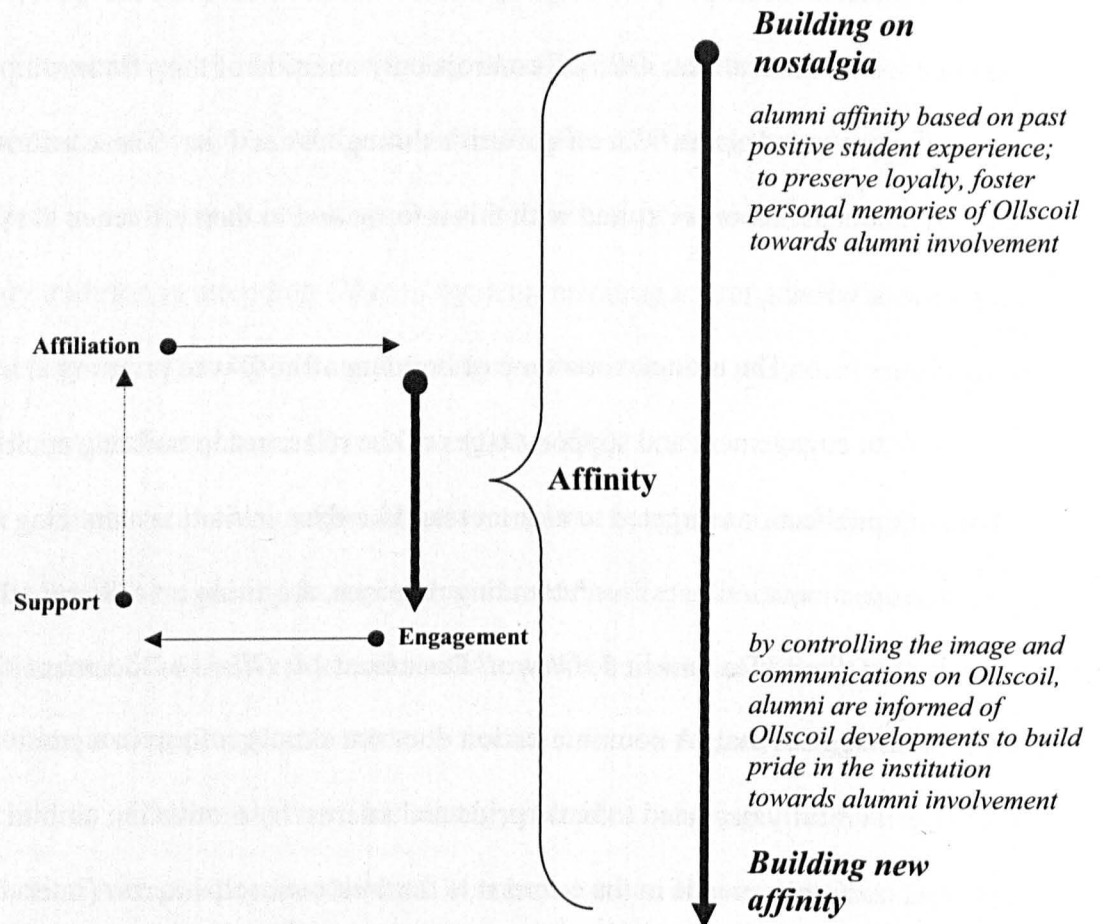
alumni become even more crucial. IA communications become the knowledge base for these interactions between alumni and prospective students. Alumni are in a position to offer their own experience and impression of the institution and the IA offices anticipate that this impression of *Ollscoil* is influenced through IA communications. *Ollscoil* controls only one side of this relationship—what is portrayed about *Ollscoil* outwards through IA activity. These informal alumni ambassadors are armed with this information to then influence the prospective students.

The ultimate outcome of building affinity is to progress alumni from affinity to engagement and support stages of the relationship building cycle. The IA publications targeted to alumni read like open invitations: enticing alumni to participation in events, attending reunions, acquiring an *Ollscoil* affinity credit card (*Ollscoil* Document 5; *Ollscoil* Document 14; *Ollscoil* Document 9). Evidence suggests that IA communication does not simply inform in a passive manner, but is carefully designed to build pride and interest by motivating alumni to get involved in *Ollscoil*, even if in the outset it is for their own self-interest (Interview- MAA-ID4; *Ollscoil* Document 25; *Ollscoil* Document 37; *Ollscoil* Document 38)

Similar to affiliation outcomes, the emphasis for affinity outcomes consists in creating a critical mass of alumni who are informed and enlightened on and by the institution. The two extremes of the continuum in Figure 15 illustrate the balance of the dynamic interactions of alumni affinity. On one pole, IA practice builds affinity from the nostalgia of an individual alumnus, emphasising the positive student experience along with the image of *Ollscoil* as a vibrant institution. On the other extreme, stands the diversity of affinity, where IA practice controls the University's

image and attempts to build new affinity by communicating widely hoping to find new areas that interest and motivate alumni to enhance or acquire *Ollscoil* affinity.

**Figure 15 Outcomes of Affinity Interactions at *Ollscoil*:
Building Relationships with Alumni using IA practice**



The two ends of this continuum show a tension between preserving the *Ollscoil* reputation that led alumni to hold affinity with the institution in the first place, and a desire to educate alumni on a new image and current developments of the institution. The findings indicate that both the CMU and AAO are charged with the challenge of building affinity with such diverse groups as recent graduates to graduates from decades ago. The purpose of building affinity with these diverse groups is to create a captive audience that shares the same information. This affinity can only be measured through the anecdotal accounts by alumni as it becomes known to IA

offices. The IA offices then attempt to progress this nostalgia towards new areas of *Ollscoil* affinity and involvement in the institution.

IA practice at *Ollscoil*, by sowing the seeds early, gives students the opportunity to gain understanding and build affinity while offering initiatives that show students the engagement and support by alumni. The alumni advertisement in the Students' Union handbook describes and normalises a lifelong relationship with the institution:

Being a graduate of *Ollscoil* is about sharing your sense of community. When you've walked down the same corridors as someone else for years, you get a good idea what it's been like in their shoes. You are one of over 50,000 students to have walked the corridors of *Ollscoil* and shared a time in your lives- the time of your lives- and this you'll take wherever you end up in the world (*Ollscoil* Document 25, p.128).

The subtext implies that all *Ollscoil* students enjoy a positive student experience and the advertisement finishes with: '*Ollscoil*- People for Life' reaffirming the University link (Ibid.). This allows students to consider lifelong relationship with the institution after graduation as a norm. It was reported that some students feel removed from the University: '...only part of *Ollscoil* for a few years' (Interview- SUP-ID6, 4). Thus the control of the information going to students about life after graduation, through the IA Offices, enables students to acquire feelings of affinity for the institution.

The involvement of alumni themselves in the affinity building process for students stands in the middle of this spectrum, with alumni reflecting on their own affinity and, at the same time, contributing to the University's efforts on building new affinity. The rhetoric of using the "we" and "us" in alumni-targeted publications indicates the University's way of subtly enabling alumni to feel a part of the *Ollscoil* family, as advocates to preserve and advance the University's reputation. The

affinity stage at *Ollscoil* takes a meta-governance position by reflecting on the image and view of alumni of the University from the outside and finding ways to re-create and change this view from the inside-out. *Ollscoil* is strategic in developing relationships with alumni, acknowledging the old reputation of the institution balanced with the new one, and installing this new reputation as the normative view, justifying it as an imperative for *Ollscoil* to vie with other higher education institutions.

5.2.3 Engagement and Outcomes for *Ollscoil*

Why does *Ollscoil* engage with alumni? The creation of opportunities for alumni to engage with the University, primarily through the AAO, focuses on the benefit to the individual, such as meeting old friends. The outcome of engagement for *Ollscoil* is an opportunity to build active affinity with alumni. *Ollscoil* alumni events are popular, with impressive attendance at reunions (*Ollscoil* Document 14; *Ollscoil* Document 5; Field Notes, FN-03). The IA offices become facilitators of moving alumni from nostalgic feelings towards active participation through a series of services and events to begin two-way interactions: the affinity credit card; discounts on membership to the *Ollscoil* sports centre, the “find a friend” service, alumni reunions, along with seminars and regional events. This indicates a critical mass of alumni who believe in the institution and legitimise it through participation. Some alumni go a step further by arranging specific alumni reunions themselves (Interview- MAA-ID4, 6; *Ollscoil* Doc 33) or establishing regional networks (*Ollscoil* Document 81). This stage of the relationship building process presents tensions within the institution. Although alumni relations is considered a key component of IA internationally, at *Ollscoil* the alumni events, such as reunions, do not yield the same priority, interest or involvement by *Ollscoil* management or

faculty as student recruitment initiatives or indeed the interactions with prospective or current *Ollscoil* donors.

The outcome to the engagement stage is the fostering of goodwill with alumni employed as a strategic stepping stone to support and to benefit the institution, for example as donors, as volunteers or through participation in University governance. Moreover, with hundreds of alumni attending reunions, this *outcome* demonstrates the active testament by individual alumni to show their affinity. For the wider public, the participation in alumni events or alumni availing of alumni services, such as the affinity credit card scheme, represents an individual with belief in the University's mission and values.

The alumni media network is another example of a well-informed and engaged group with two levels of benefit. First, the network provides personal and professional benefit for alumni themselves to engage in a group based on an *Ollscoil* connection and common profession. For *Ollscoil*, this alumni media network provides a critical mass of professionals that the institution can draw on to provide positive media coverage, especially nationally, achieving one of the institution's goals. This special interest network was initiated by an alumnus, with support from the AAO. The network started by using the alumni database to identify alumni employed in the media sector. The segmented alumni were then contacted and a number of meetings to formalise the network ensued. The group is highlighted in the alumni magazine and Web site, seeking new alumni membership, with latitude to develop independently; the network is the driving force and the AAO provides the behind-the-scenes support. As a result, the network brings prestige and even legitimacy to *Ollscoil* in the wider public balanced with the University offering a valuable service to the alumni community.

Newman (2001) describes change as: ‘...different elements of the old being packaged and repackaged producing tensions and disjunctures as different sets of norms and assumptions are overlaid on each other’ (p.26). The paid membership to the Alumni Club repackaged as a new Alumni Association open to all alumni produced a tension between Club members who felt ousted by the institution. University management made this decision a decade ago with a long-term outcome in mind: to ask alumni for donations (Interview- MAA-ID4; Interview- AGA-ID8). To maximise the potential participation of all alumni in the University, a widening of the Alumni Club membership was required. The University viewed the Alumni Club, once fully engaged with the University, as a short-term issue, a matter managed through the AAO. By making certain concessions with the Alumni Club members, the AAO hoped to avoid any negative publicity while also trying to find ways to re-engage these alumni (MAA-ID4). This led to a shift in the types of interactions between alumni and the institution. Past Alumni Club members continue to receive distinct recognition and interactions with University and IA personnel, even when attending Alumni Association events. Moreover the Alumni Club members have a special notation on the alumni database to ensure careful attention is given in even general alumni correspondence (Ibid.). This is an attempt by *Ollscoil* for public damage control while delicately managing this group of alumni to consider re-engaging in existing alumni initiatives.

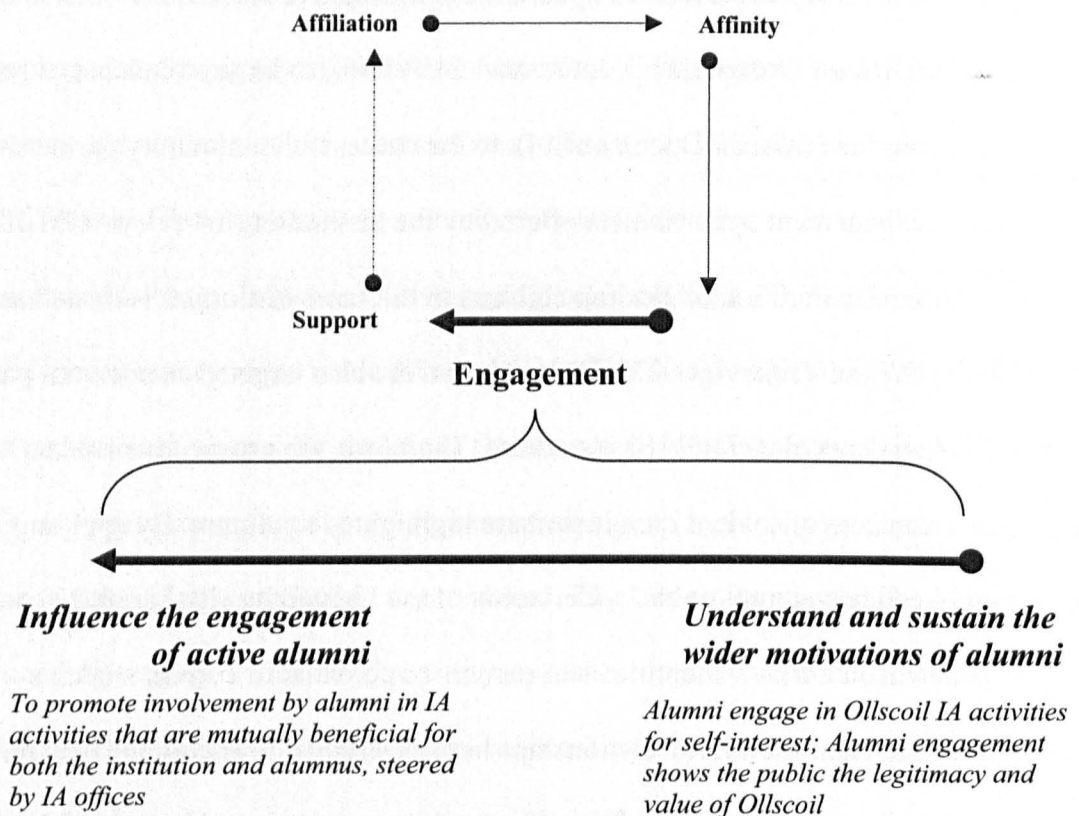
‘Alumni Association is about building goodwill, friend-raising, a whole host of goodwill activity which has as its goal, fostering the culture of the University, ensuring the continuing supply of students. You hope alumni will send their own children to university here...spreading the mission of the University’ (Interview- DD-ID2, 3). This description outlines engagement as an inherent aspect of going to

University at *Ollscoil* as apparent from the active student life outside the classroom (*Ollscoil* Document 63; Interview- SUP-ID6), to large attendance at reunions by alumni (*Ollscoil* Document 14), to the successful community partnerships and the engagement opportunities offered by the institution (Interview- OM-ID4). The family tradition of sending children to the same institution is treated as a given at *Ollscoil* (Interview- DD-ID2). Alumni are also targeted as potential parents of future students, not simply past students. Therefore, the prospective student events and success of student recruitment are highlighted to alumni. By applying IA as a way to educate alumni on the wider needs of the University also carefully considers other linked *Ollscoil* identities—as parents of potential or current students—to showcase the institution. The relationships become crucial, to encourage new relationships, demonstrating the diversity of interactions, even down to regional events to bring new students to the University.

I return to the affinity credit card scheme as another form of engagement with positive outcomes for *Ollscoil*. The alumni who elect to carry a credit card with the *Ollscoil* brand emblazoned on it show themselves to have a commitment to the institution and *Ollscoil* gains another public form of promotion. Moreover, the University Foundation facilitates the financial benefit of the credit card to *Ollscoil*, with the sponsoring bank providing a University contribution for each subscription along with a percentage of spend on each card to the institution (*Ollscoil* Document 9). The IA offices use the affinity credit card to educate alumni on the ease and logistics of donating to the institution, moving alumni towards the support stage of the relationship.

Figure 16 outlines the continuum of engagement outcomes for the institution, focused on the active engagement of alumni:

**Figure 16 Outcomes of Engagement Interactions at *Ollscoil*:
Building Relationships with Alumni using IA practice**



On one side, alumni involved and engaged in the institution is a testimony on the student experience and the feelings the alumni have for the institution. The challenge for IA practice at the engagement stage of the cycle is to understand and sustain the motivation of alumni to engage in the institution for their own self-interest. At the same time, the outcome from this alumni self-interested engagement is demonstrating a wider public legitimacy and value of *Ollscoil*.

At the other pole of the continuum stand the interactions that are orchestrated by IA offices to influence the type of engagement undertaken by alumni. These engagement initiatives tend to be more overtly mutually beneficial, such as the affinity credit card or the support for a new regional network in a priority area for the University to attract international students. This spectrum is subtle, with the balance of traditional events on the right-hand side which are popular with alumni, combined with alumni engaging with new initiatives on the left-hand side, equally beneficial,

with an added strategic outcome for *Ollscoil*. For instance, the annual alumni reunion typically attracts about five hundred alumni, a remarkable indication of the interest in engaging with the institution and with past friends. This is the conventional cycle of events for alumni to return (“come back”) to the institution. When alumni, or indeed the Alumni Association, decide to diversify and change initiatives, the outcome is bringing new alumni together, exchanging new ideas, widening the opportunities for the alumni themselves, as exemplified by the media alumni network. This outcome also brings opportunities for the institution and is balanced with sustaining current engagement. The meta-governance approach to interactions means engaging in the institution is taken-for-granted with the onus on those alumni who wish to initiate their own programmes or events. Engaging alumni in events allows a strengthening of outside, active players in encouraging even further and more segmented engagement, using their involvement as a testimony of the value of getting involved, such as with the special reunion organised by an alumna (*Ollscoil* Document 33).

5.2.4 Support and Outcomes for *Ollscoil*

At *Ollscoil*, fundraising only relates to a small proportion of alumni (Interview- DD- ID2). The outcomes of support are broader, including contributions to directly benefit the institution: volunteerism, mentorship and expertise along with the philanthropic donations. While the culture of fundraising is part of the IA component of development the research suggests there are other areas of support in alumni relationships that ultimately benefit *Ollscoil*.

Through the alumni magazine and other communication sources, *Ollscoil* promotes opportunities for alumni to support the institution, such as creating Career Centre profiles or acting as alumni mentors for students (*Ollscoil* Document 24; Interview- MAA-ID4). This call is open to all alumni, regardless of past involvement, interest, affinity and engagement in the institution. The outcomes

reported are primarily positive, with new alumni contributing to these initiatives that would have otherwise been unknown to the institution. If the AAO becomes aware of participation in a support activity, it is added to the individual alumnus profile on the database, for future, targeted participation in supporting *Ollscoil*. When alumni shift from the passive to the active involvement stage, the interaction with the institution also changes towards a sense of responsibility for the development of the institution (Interview- AGA-ID6). This comprises of a critical mass of alumni with a desire to see the institution get better, and more importantly advance the desire of being involved in this process.

Alumni involvement in regional recruitment or in student mentorship entails altruistic behaviour that contributes to the betterment of the University. By participating in school visits, student recruitment events and student send-offs, alumni play an active role in improving student enrolment figures in certain key regions (Interview- CMM-ID2; Interview- MAA-ID4). Alumni are a living testimonial of the success of an *Ollscoil* education evident, to the wider university community by: the dynamic interactions between alumni and IA personnel, alumni and student recruitment staff and alumni and prospective students, By participating in these events, alumni shift from a role as outsider to the institution and consumer of IA practice, to become involved in conveying the *Ollscoil* message- an insider to the IA practice towards advancing the institution. More than a captive audience, these alumni become integrated with the institution and become messengers and known ambassadors of *Ollscoil*.

IA has also influenced University governance structures. The findings show that for a long time the alumni perspective and even representation on the *Ollscoil* Governing Authority and University committees was somewhat short-sighted. Until

recently, all graduate representatives on the Governing Authority were internal staff, which required a special dispensation to satisfy governance guidelines (Interview-US-ID2; Interview-AGA-ID8). The research suggests that the four graduate representatives on the Governing Authority offered the academic faculty members, in particular, the opportunity to acquire a coveted spot on the Governing Authority, usually by acclamation. During the period of the case study, progress was made as one of the four *Ollscoil* graduate places on the Governing Authority went to an external alumnus, elected by *Ollscoil* graduates (*Ollscoil* Document 57, p.1).

Described as 'graduates, elected by graduates' (Ibid.) on the Governing Authority listing, these members of this body are not expected to represent the alumni community at large in University governance (Interview- AGA-ID6; Interview- US-ID2). In fact, as alumni members of the Governing Authority they do not represent or consult with the alumni community. Moreover, these alumni members do not directly interface or communicate with the AAO in any formal way and indeed are no longer formally invited to key alumni events (Interview- MAA-ID4; Interview- AGA-ID8). They are individuals, interested in the governance of the institution, who also happen to be *Ollscoil* alumni. One graduate member recognised the potential for a link with the AAO, to build stronger interconnections with the wider alumni community, including communicating developments from the Governing Authority along with strengthening the alumni voice at the governance table (Interview- AGA-ID8). This single example of an external alumnus on the Governing Authority shows the alumnus's advancement through the relationship building cycle, culminating with an involvement in the University governance and thus making a greater difference to the institution (Ibid.). This alumnus expressed an interest in promoting the Governing Authority representation to the wider alumni

community, with the aim to cultivate more external interest in graduate representation in University governance structures. As exemplified the support stage, alumni who are deeply involved in the University want to see that other alumni support the University to the same degree as they do.

Fundraising is a core component of the support stage, albeit smaller at *Ollscoil* than at American universities. The evidence suggests that fundraising is targeted to specific projects to bring about change (*Ollscoil* Document 3; *Ollscoil* Document 4; *Ollscoil* Document 15; *Ollscoil* Document 16; *Ollscoil* Document 53; *Ollscoil* Document 20). The projects tend to match an alumna's affinity or interest and cover areas such areas as student bursaries or capital projects, making a financial investment in the institution. These donations bring an additional, complementary income source to the institution. The data suggests that at *Ollscoil* fundraising is not an expected outcome of all alumni relationships (Interview- DD-ID4). Some internal stakeholders view IA practice at *Ollscoil* with cynicism and they consider this practice as having one ultimate outcome—donations (Interview- MAA-ID4). However, the IA offices acknowledge the culture for donations is not yet engrained in the Irish university sector and, as a result, at the time of the case study, it is not an expectation of the relationship building cycle (Interview- DD-ID2). Thus, at this time, to move alumni through the relationship building cycle towards donations is not realistic; therefore other forms of contributions to the institution are devised such as mentoring or the affinity card.

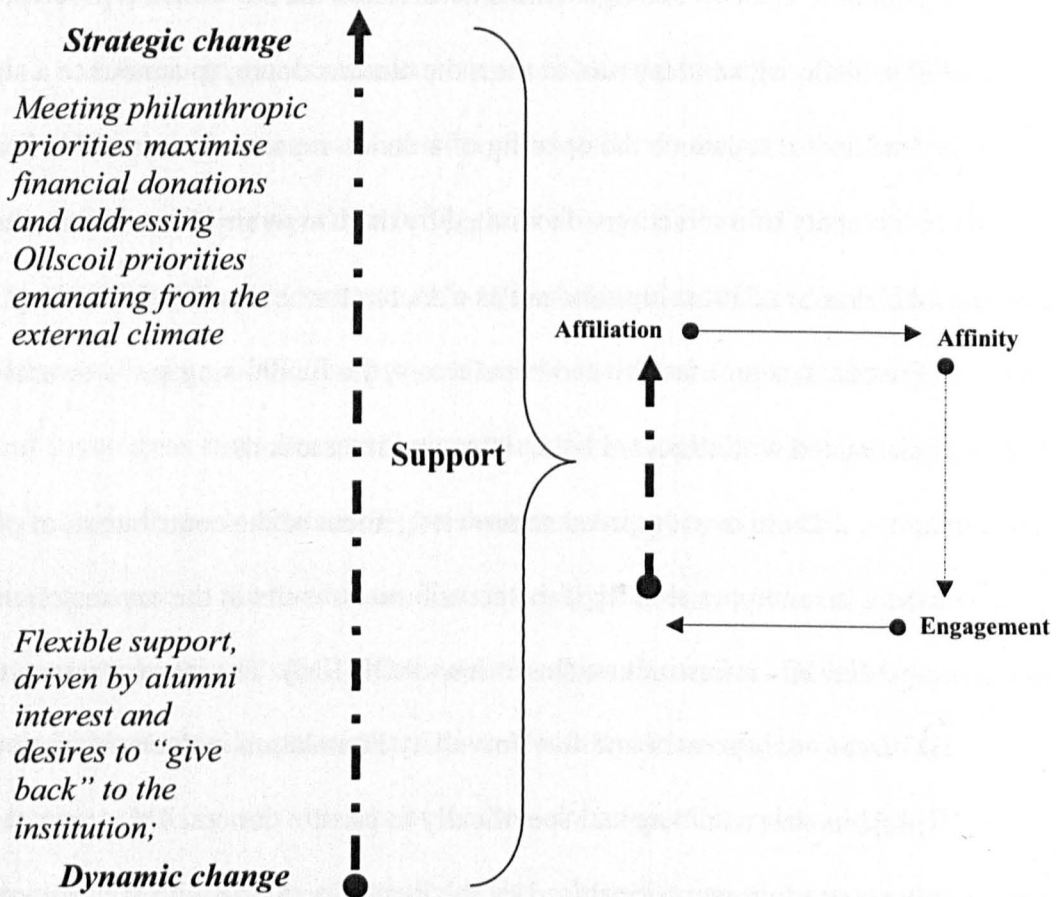
Alumni donations are still a valued outcome of support. The obvious outcome of an alumni donation is to bring about change for the institution: a new programme or support services for students, usually in areas identified in the University's strategic priorities, such as the Campus of the Future campaign (*Ollscoil* Document

4). The University Foundation also engages in stewardship of alumni donors, that is, specific interactions to account for the appropriate use of the funds with acknowledgement by the institution, and thus creating opportunities towards a new donation. *Ollscoil* management is involved in the stewardship process, especially the President, who endeavours to meet the alumna donor, to announce a significant donation or to launch the opening of a donor-supported project. This process creates a diversity of interactions, facilitated by the University Foundation which personalise the alumni relationships and act as a source for new points of funding. For the President, senior faculty and benefactors, the fundraising and stewardship process are associated with expected behaviours and interactions.

There is widespread acknowledgement of the contribution of philanthropy to the University, especially if the contribution results in the expansion of the institution's infrastructure (Interview- AOP-ID6). The internal interactions between *Ollscoil* management and the University Foundation include discussions on capital projects that would appeal specifically to private donors. This steers the outcome of the type of projects prioritised by the institution along with the projects ultimately funded by alumni. For example, a major private donation initially sparked the University's programme in outreach and civic engagement (Interview- OM-ID4). This donation provided the University with venture capital to show the value of civic engagement work to the University. As a result, *Ollscoil* recently provided core-funding to the Outreach Office since the aforementioned venture was considered a strategic priority area for the University (*Ollscoil* Document 36). Thus the value of IA is recognised as it provided the initial impetus to steer the University's priorities towards civic engagement initiatives, showing the value of these initiatives to reinvent the reputation of the institution (Interview- CMM-ID6).

The *outcomes* of support interactions are shown in Figure 17 as a continuum focused on institutional change:

Figure 17 Outcomes of Support Interactions at *Ollscoil* Building Relationships with Alumni using IA practice



At the support stage, the ultimate outcome is the opportunity for the institution to address the pressures from the higher education climate—increased competition, the autonomy-accountability dichotomy with the State and additional sources of funding.

On one pole the outcome promotes dynamic change, with the interest and the steering of this change driven by alumni, through a desire to contribute something to benefit the institution. Qualitative or dynamic change to the institution by alumni includes the contribution to enhancing the student experience, or participation in activities that increase student enrolment. The Governing Authority graduate membership also shows itself as two examples of dynamic change of outcomes.

First, the external alumnus, elected on the body by other alumni, has changed the long-standing tradition of faculty members as the sole alumni representatives on the Governing Authority, indicating a change in the voice on the Board that steers the institution. Second, the external alumnus sees a wider linkage between his role and the alumni community, including raising awareness of this opportunity for all alumni to participate in governance structures.

On the other side of the pole the outcome is *strategic* change, initiated or prioritised initially by *Ollscoil*, mediated and supported through the IA offices and presented to alumni to steer decisions on, primarily, philanthropic donations which would eventually bring about change. The support stage also shows the ultimate level of legitimacy and testament of the belief by alumni in the goals and values of the institution with direct alumni participation to interact with the institution and contribute to change. As an instrument of interactive governance, IA practice is new and underpins the process towards “giving back” to the institution. This educational process includes senior management and the internal institution itself, thus the IA offices’ role is to promote the awareness and the appropriate conditions to realise private funding for the institution. *Ollscoil*’s Strategic Plan suggests widespread growth and differentiation between the five years that span the first strategic plan and the newest plan that is infused throughout with the nature of IA practice (*Ollscoil* Document 1; *Ollscoil* Document 36). This normative effect enables philanthropic activity and the interactions between the institution and alumni donors to become a high and crucial priority for the institution.

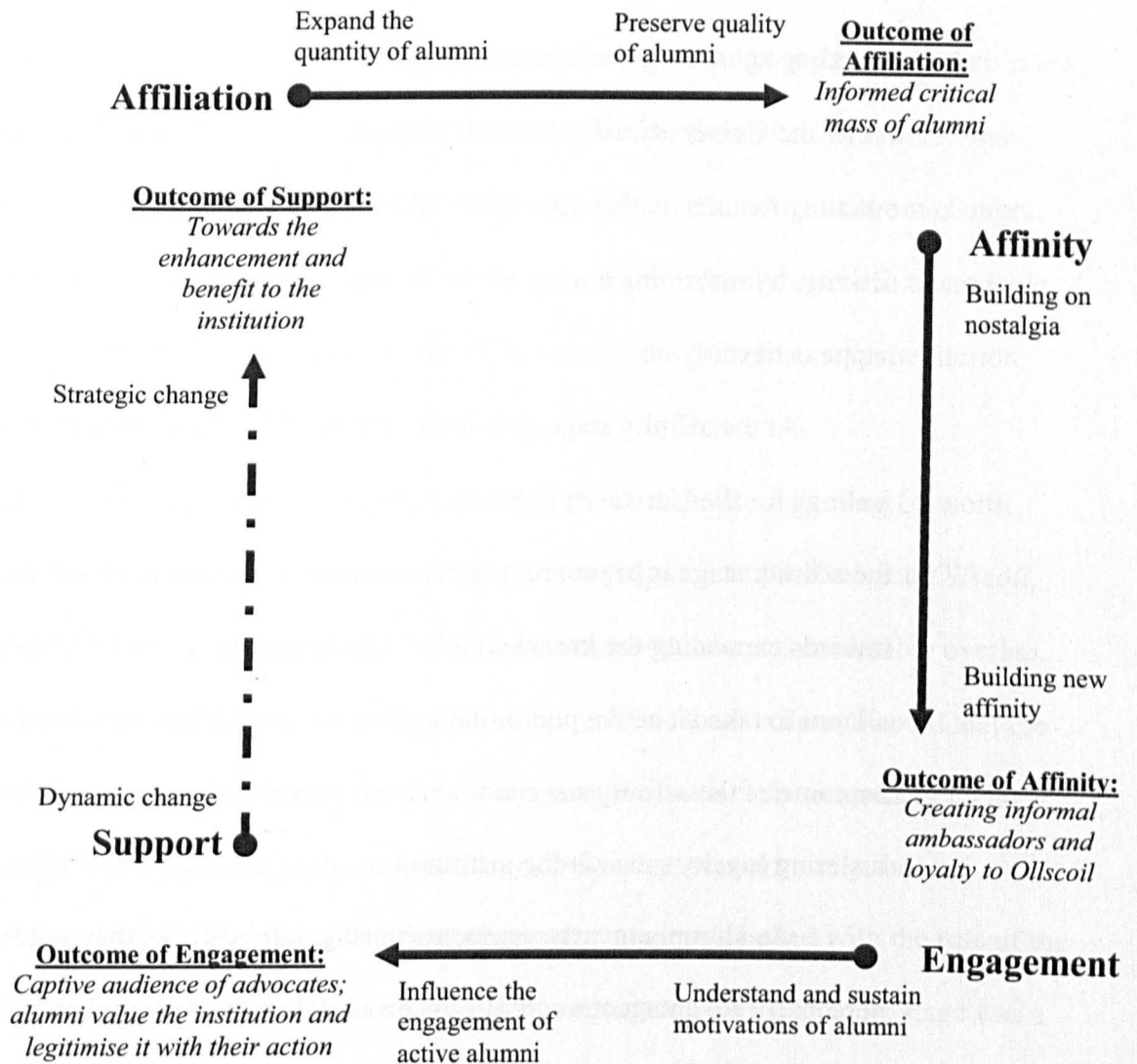
5.3 Summary

The design of the relationship building cycle is such that the outcome spectrums allow for a progression through the cycle. This synthesis allows for reflection on the development of the outcome spectrums using the *Ollscoil* findings.

The baseline for each of the four stages of the cycle moves clockwise through the spectrum towards the next stage of the cycle. IA is the catalyst to progress individuals or individual cohorts of alumni through the cycle.

For example, at the initial stages of the engagement stage, the role of IA is to understand and sustain the wider motivation of alumni. By offering engagement opportunities, such as an alumni class reunion, the individual then participates in the event, harnessing this motivation. Therefore, the move along the spectrum begins, with the role of IA changing as it attempts to influence active alumni towards participating in other types of engagements (or considering developing this type of engagement for others), such as with the alumni-initiated alumni media network or a reunion organised by alumni themselves. The AAO aims to progress active alumni towards specific support initiatives: to attend regional student send-off events, to participate in student recruitment or to join a professional network through the University Foundation. Figure 18 illustrates this progression of outcomes at each stage for the entire cycle:

Figure 18 *Ollscoil* Outcomes mapped on the IA Relationship Building Cycle



The cycle progresses clockwise from affiliation to support, with the spectrums of IA practice work towards outcomes at each stage. Although the relationship building cycle concentrates on individual alumni, the poles of each of the outcome spectrums describe the role of IA practice at *Ollscoil* to yield such outcomes. This progresses alumni at each stage towards the outcome of that stage, underlined in Figure 18, and towards progressing them to the next stage of the cycle.

Starting with the affiliation stage, alumni are first considered as a quantitative construct at *Ollscoil*, which is linked to the University's priorities of wider student recruitment and retention. The affiliation stage progresses the University's attitude

towards alumni, using IA to nurture the existing quality of the alumni cohort, including enhancing the information related to an alumnus. At this initial stage in the cycle, the University aims to create a critical mass of alumni. This affiliation outcome focuses on the work of the IA office to lay a foundation to a lifelong activity, by informing alumni about IA processes and foreshadowing to alumni what happens next.

At the affinity stage, it is implicit that *Ollscoil* alumni already hold nostalgic feelings for the University from their positive student experience. The role of IA at the affinity stage is to progress alumni towards new thinking about the institution and towards expanding the knowledge and harnessing this knowledge towards enticing alumni to take an active part in the institution. Through IA communications, the outcome of the affinity stage is to create informal ambassadors of *Ollscoil* and thus fostering loyalty towards the institution.

As alumni enter the engagement stage of the cycle, they opt for enjoyable or personally advantageous activities such as attending an alumni reunion. The role of IA practice is to steer an alumna's comfort zone by suggesting other complementary ways of engaging in the institution, aiming to gain another advocate for the institution. Active participation by alumni in *Ollscoil* builds the outcome of the engagement stage: alumni realize the value of the institution for themselves personally, a powerful tool to legitimise the institution to the public. As alumni become more engaged it is clear that the advocacy for the institution could translate into direct benefit to changing the institution.

Up to this stage, the alumni undergoing change throughout the process alter their own relationship with their *alma mater*; *Ollscoil* does not change as a result, and the IA practice at each stage reveals new avenues to sustain the alumni

relationships. At the support stage, the ultimate outcome is the benefit of alumni relationships to bring about change for the institution. By ‘giving back’ to their *alma mater*, the support stage challenges alumni to channel their interest, affinity and advocacy towards the development of the University. This stage is about change: from dynamic change through volunteering for the University’s benefit to strategic change, that includes fundraising towards meeting the priorities of the institution, coming full circle.

The *Ollscoil* case study also revealed another nuance regarding IA worth noting: due to the type of outcomes expected, anticipated and achieved at *Ollscoil*, the IA offices—and the associated IA components—do show considerable overlap. When I introduced the relationships building cycle in Chapter Four, I noted that the interdependence between components was prevalent, with each component taking a natural lead for a stage in the process: the *affinity* stage was primarily the communications IA component; the *engagement* stage was linked with the role of the affective domain in the alumni relations IA component; and the *support* stage was a combination of the IA component of development described as a strategic change, with the volunteerism and goodwill, to create dynamic change. The three IA components and *Ollscoil* IA offices rely on the *affiliation* stage as the foundation for this IA practice to take place. Although I noted that the interdependence between the IA components is less noticeable at *Ollscoil* than in the international IA experience, this interdependence at the outcome level overlaps towards building relationships with alumni, demonstrating a coherent sequence in IA work.

At the affiliation stage, it is the AAO and the University Foundation that share the database and concentrate specifically on alumni affiliation. The CMU anchors the alumni affiliation through, for instance, the branding and recruitment

work. Thus the three IA components—communications, alumni relations and fundraising working together on different aspects of affiliation towards defining and measuring the needs and potential of the alumni community towards a commitment of creating and expanding a critical mass of alumni, yielding benefit for both the individual and the institution.

The CMU along with the AAO are both actively involved in the affinity-building stage with alumni. The CMU controls the public image of the institution, providing the parameters on the type of appropriate communications that should occur to external University actors, including alumni. The AAO is then responsible for targeting affinity towards the alumni cohort through the alumni magazine and other communication mechanisms, to create informed, loyal and committed *Ollscoil* ambassadors.

The engagement stage also sees input from all three components IA offices, with the primary responsibility on the AAO to coordinate and build alumni programming to encourage this engagement. As a stepping stone to support, the work of the CMU cross-promotes alumni events and services, including the affinity credit card or unique alumni events. By creating not only ambassadors but active advocates for the institution, the University Foundation shows itself to be interested specifically in those alumni who may progress through to ultimately providing financial support for the institution because of their strong affinity and current engagement. Engagement initiatives are a way for the University Foundation to identify and court prospective donors in a casual environment.

At *Ollscoil*, the support stage is divided between volunteer support and fundraising support by alumni. Thus, the responsibility of the stage is divided between the AAO and the University Foundation. The findings suggest that

volunteerism is even beyond the scope of the alumni relations component, taking in the University administration for the alumni representation in *Ollscoil* governance. The University Foundation takes the lead as the change translates into donations. The IA practice and organisational structures at *Ollscoil* are still in their infancy. As *Ollscoil* develops a critical mass of engaged and supportive alumni, the interactions between the University administration, faculty and units with IA practice will increase and as a result, the benefit of IA practice to the University will be fully recognised.

'Governance is the defining link between a university's aspirations and their fulfillment' (Hirsch 2001, p.153). This quote underlines the crucial importance of governance in affecting change at a university. IA is also a conduit for change as it enacts interactive governance at the University. As outlined in the previous section, the outcomes from the relationship building process with alumni fall into four stages, with four continuum diagrams which examine the normalising of alumni relationship activity. At *Ollscoil* it is evident IA activity was initiated with relatively limited resources, including small staff teams when compared to the American or UK counterparts (Interview- DD-ID4). In this research, I concentrate on building relationships with alumni as well as the role that the institution itself has in the process and the extent to which acquires benefits from this process.¹⁵ Kooiman (2001) defines governance as 'solving problems'(p.139) and 'care for institutions' (p.140) and both of these definitions are appropriate for considering the outcomes from this relationship building cycle. In the Irish context, as outlined in this case study, the ultimate outcome of building relationships is not simply to create support for the financial benefit of the institution, but to create a more fully integrated and

¹⁵ Naturally, the individual and community also gain benefit from a relationship with the University. This analysis goes beyond the scope of this study.

comprehensive support system for the institution. *Ollscoil* relies on the alumni for interactive governance, as a key representative group, creating what Kooiman (2003) calls 'interdependencies' (p.11). Alumni represent the institution, both consciously and unconsciously, through the calibre of work and contribution that they make to society. *Ollscoil* has been successful in leaving an indelible mark on the alumni both at the cognitive domain with knowledge, skills and critical thinking and at the affective domain with nostalgia, loyalty and fond memories.

A core part of our work is in nurturing lasting relationships with donors who share the University's vision for the future.

A description of the Ollscoil University Foundation (Ollscoil Document 5, p.6)

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion

The title of this thesis, “Active University, Interactive Alumni” offers a succinct response to the main research question of this study. The emergence of Institutional Advancement (IA) at *Ollscoil* evolves as the catalyst for building relationships with alumni, setting the foundation and charting the progress of such relationships. By becoming active in IA activity, the University opens immense potential for creating meaningful relationships with alumni. The research findings confirm the notion that a positive student experience contributes to the ease of building relationships with *Ollscoil* graduates. IA offers the University a means to harness this “good feeling” towards honing the affiliation and building an affinity with alumni, and finally to make available to alumni a myriad of opportunities for engagement in the institution not only for their own benefit but, at the same time, for cultivating their support for the benefit and change of the institution.

These stages also require a level of interactivity between alumni. I argue that the interactions between alumni and the institution are not linear, and involve instead a cybernetic web of interactivity between alumni with: other alumni, University staff and faculty, students, prospective students, honorary graduates, the wider public and State agencies. Each relationship has its unique set of interactions, facilitated by IA practice. While the IA practice at *Ollscoil* is the enabler for alumni involvement with the institution, the onus remains with each individual to decide on the extent of the

participation. The interactions, initiated through IA, steer the direction of the alumni relationships, while the institution focuses on its own goals and strategies.

The emergence of IA practice has transformed *Ollscoil*; there is both a physical and psychological change. This change transpires through the new campus buildings funded by private donations as well as through the new mindset instilled towards the image of *Ollscoil*. IA practice in the last decade has embedded change within the institution subtly and seamlessly. Consequently, for a significant number of alumni-turned-staff, the recent change at the University, related to IA practice, is viewed with suspicion and as radical change (Interview- CMM-ID6). Examining interactive governance at *Ollscoil* shows how the development of relationships has the potential to steer the advancement of the institution. Even the potential of such interactions has changed the fundamental and strategic initiatives of the institution. This final chapter draws together and synthesises the research themes towards a response to the main and supplementary research questions.

6.1 Summary of Findings

Ollscoil, as a single case study of an Irish university, shows itself as an institution undergoing change with IA playing a significant role in steering this change. The summary of the three chapters of analysis—*input*, *output* and *outcome*—provides an overview of the emergence of IA as a relationship-building tool with alumni.

6.1.1 Input: The Emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*

Ollscoil shows the emergence of IA in both the organisational structures and through the practice at the University. The evidence indicates that IA was established due to the higher education climate influencing *Ollscoil* including pressure to keep pace with other Irish universities as well as to keep pace with universities around the

globe. The purpose for initiating IA was not uniquely to advance the institution, but, as well to focus on external forces driving *Ollscoil* into survival mode.

The State control has also contributed to the emergence of IA at *Ollscoil*. As the primary funding source of *Ollscoil*, the State produced tension between accountability and autonomy that made the institution vulnerable to a decrease in State support. Moreover, the State controls the public interest in higher education and dictates the priorities that filter down to the market, thus creating this demand directly on *Ollscoil*. This market demand, coupled with State priorities, created a competitive environment between higher education institutions for student recruitment, research funding, academic programmes and capital projects.

IA practice provided *Ollscoil* with an empowering response to interactions with the State and the market by strengthening institutional self-control, as illustrated through the use of the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983). Through the IA effective communications *Ollscoil* distinguished itself within the market in order to attract students to a university that meets their needs, balancing a well-rounded student experience with an academically rigorous education.

The IA practice, organisational structures and activities at *Ollscoil* are adopted from international practice. This highlights the second aspect of competition. *Ollscoil* viewed standard IA practice as a means to respond cohesively to the University's national and international reputation as well as its international ranking. *Ollscoil* established the three IA components of *communications*, *alumni relations* and *development*, in both organisational structures and practice to counter and reproduce IA operations at other Irish and international institutions.

IA at *Ollscoil* shows interdependence between these three IA components. Perhaps the components are not as tightly overlapping as in the international

experience, but the linkage is prominent, usually with one IA office taking the lead and receiving support from the other IA offices. The evidence indicates that as IA practice becomes more sophisticated at *Ollscoil*, the closer the interdependence comes to contribute to and to form a concerted IA response to the market and to the State.

IA is slowly becoming an integrated aspect of *Ollscoil*, permeating in visible ways, such as establishing a consistent University image. The evidence suggests that IA practice is still in its infancy at *Ollscoil*, with areas of alumni relations and fundraising not explicitly noticeable across the institution. However, the new Strategic Plan at *Ollscoil* does integrate the major aspects of IA across the institution, instead of confining them to a centralised activity. As a result, all academic departments and non-academic services will be expected to consider aspects of IA in their operations. Choosing capital projects based on the potential for appeal to private donors is another example of the integration of an IA ethos across the campus. Moreover, the *Ollscoil* academic research priorities were narrowed down to concentrate on the University's specialisms and to target an international profile in these research areas, including becoming experts to media sources.

While the institution is actively integrating IA systems, a major challenge at *Ollscoil* arises, with people operating from different knowledge bases and backgrounds vis-à-vis their experience of IA. These differences pose difficulties for staff, faculty, students and alumni in identifying with and taking ownership of IA activity. Therefore, education becomes part of the role of IA offices in executing IA practice to the wider *Ollscoil* community. IA is slowly becoming valued in the institution, the University management, personnel and even alumni view IA practice as the responsibility of the IA offices, not entirely identifying a role for themselves to

commit to, or participate in IA operations. The one exception is the extent to which University stakeholders view and support *Ollscoil*'s image that presents a strong and consistent message to the market. However, the reluctance by academic faculty to engage with the media, or senior management to interact fully with graduates, shows a lack of understanding on the role of each individual to contribute to the advancement of the institution. On the other hand, when the expectations are clear, such as with the President meeting with prospective donors, the identification with and support for IA initiatives becomes united and stronger.

IA is becoming a permanent practice at *Ollscoil*, with organisational structures and procedures developed for contributing to the University's long-term strategy. The inherent nature of IA means that, with time, the identification by stakeholders has the potential to evolve as will the knowledge, systems and terminology of IA towards creating a culture of lifelong support by alumni to their *alma mater*. *Ollscoil* recognises that the resources and infrastructure for IA are scarce, compared to American institutions (Interview- DD-ID2). Laudable and ambitious plans are prepared for the new alumni database, which is part of the long-term strategy. On a practical level, this investment is a means to profile alumni for more sophisticated IA practice in the future; on a strategic level, the investment is indicative of *Ollscoil*'s long-standing commitment to IA activity.

Although IA is modelled after international systems and shares many of its characteristics, IA at *Ollscoil* is modified, to some extent, for the Irish context. The international and national IA professional networks are viewed by IA offices as valuable in providing the basic principles of IA. The IA offices are now concentrating on building internal capacity and adapting this practice for the local context. Even the emergence of IA structures at *Ollscoil* are different from

international experience. At *Ollscoil*, IA has been established as three separate offices, including the University Foundation as its own legal entity, consistent with other Irish university experiences. Moreover, in the Irish context, the term Institutional Advancement, meant to encompass all three IA components is not yet totally understood, and thus the structures developed do not implicitly include an overlap or interdependency between the operations of the three components.

The perception that building relationships is a valuable process, for the institution and indeed for the students and alumni, is an emerging process. I argue that integration within the institution will develop further as IA structures and practice become more sophisticated and more interdependent between the three IA components. The profile of the IA offices within the institution is raised through internal communications with University personnel in order create concerted maintenance of the aims of IA practice. The educational function is a key element towards the long-term impact and understanding of the value of IA as a relationship-building tool.

6.1.2 Output: IA Practice at *Ollscoil* as a Relationship Building Tool

The previous section addresses the emergence of IA in an Irish university context, to respond to international and the Irish higher education climate. To address the minor research question: *How does an Irish university build relationships with alumni?* I devised an alumni relationship building process to illuminate the institution-alumni interactions in the *Ollscoil* case study.

The relationship building cycle is comprised of four stages: *affiliation, affinity, engagement and support*. The cycle concentrates on the journey of the individual alumnus with the University. Interactive governance, and in particular the orders of governance, illuminate the structure, process and conditions which foster

and effect the cycle. Thus, IA becomes the enabler for the interactions between the institution and the alumni.

The first stage in the relationship-building process for *Ollscoil* is to cast a net around a quantifiable group of alumni, and students as future alumni. All alumni are automatically members of the *Ollscoil* alumni community, affiliated to the institution for life. Year of graduation and programme of study are other affiliations attributed to individual alumni that are included in building up a individual profiles for each alumni, to be segmented by affiliation for IA activities. While the affiliation is automatic, the AAO acknowledges that alumni themselves need to recognise their own affiliation. The word “alumni” itself a fairly unknown or unused term by the general public, including by the alumni themselves. The AAO has initiated a rigorous educational strategy, targeting current students, to improve the visibility of the alumni term, to build awareness of the Alumni Association and to highlight to students their eventual, permanent membership as alumni themselves upon their graduation. The aim is to build the understanding with University stakeholders of the parameters of *Ollscoil* affiliation towards alumni as a taken-for-granted assumption by students who become graduates and, in turn, the next generation of alumni.

Building affinity with *Ollscoil* alumni is the second stage in the process, which continues to have an educational dimension generated from the IA offices outwards to alumni. Affinity felt by alumni for *Ollscoil* is both emotive and subjective. The CMU and AAO regularly communicate to the alumni community in the hope that one of the news stories, alumni profiles or student updates enables the alumni to empathise and feel affinity towards the institution. The positive student experiences at *Ollscoil* provide a good foundation for a lifelong affinity to the institution, with the aim of the routine alumni communications being a reminder of

the ongoing development of their *alma mater*. Building affinity is an ongoing process, with few tools to measure effectiveness or success. Involving alumni themselves in the affinity building process, gives the IA offices insight into what aspects of the news, image and information about the institution is absorbed or internalised. A consistent, positive message of *Ollscoil* is maintained, now viewed by the internal stakeholders as normal procedure for the University.

A two-way relationship begins at the engagement stage, with alumni participating in events or availing themselves of IA-coordinated services. It is the AAO that is primarily responsible for initiating a series of prompts to attract alumni involvement. There are the generic calls for action, such as the appeal to sign-up for the affinity credit card and the targeted engagement opportunities, such as personalised invitations to a reunion to honour a specific graduation year. The onus is on the individual alumna to engage, re-engage or participate in IA activities. *Ollscoil* is able to measure engagement initiatives, based on attendance or participation and this information is added to the profile of the individual alumnus. The progression to engagement with the institution tends to be for the direct benefit of alumni: social events, services, initiatives, networking opportunities. The alumni-initiated engagements provide a means to increase wider alumni participation, such as with alumni who organise special class reunions. Events are planned for the former members of the subscription-only Alumni Club hoping to re-engage this group in wider alumni activities, managed by the AAO with great sensitivity so as not to create further damage in the Alumni Club members-institution relationship. Thus, process and structure of engagement-related initiatives is firmly controlled by the IA offices with the Alumni Association (the inclusive successor to the alumni-run

Alumni Club) in order to ensure that the initiatives are consistent with the University strategy.

The alumni involvement at the support stage focuses on contributing to the University, from volunteering to participating in governance and making donations for *Ollscoil* projects. The support stage at *Ollscoil* deviates from international IA practice, as support for the institution by alumni primarily translates to fundraising. “Giving back” to the institution in this broader context at *Ollscoil* is shown in a variety of ways: acting as an alumni mentor, writing for the alumni magazine, becoming an alumni representative on a University committee, assisting with student recruitment, or making a donation towards an *Ollscoil* project. Each example of support also includes different types of interactions expected between alumni and institution. Moreover, the returns of the output respond to the higher education climate, with the alumni as contributors to this process of institutional self-control. While *Ollscoil* prioritises civic engagement as a cornerstone to the University’s values and direction, the contribution of alumni at the support stage needs to be further acknowledged in order to observe the connection with the University’s ethos. Moreover, the nature of this alumni giving to the University is crucial to the institution’s overall advancement.

The relationship-building cycle holds the potential to yield sustained and varied engagement and support by alumni. The positive student experience is mirrored in the alumni relationship-building cycle, with many alumni participating in alumni events as a familiar social outlet. The challenge is to harness this participation into institution-focused support.

6.1.3 Outcome: Building Relationships with Alumni at *Ollscoil*

Building relationships with alumni is only the output to the emergence of IA, as the research questions note: *How does building relationships with alumni benefit the institution?* and *Why is building relationships with alumni significant to an Irish university?* For many of the *Ollscoil* IA initiatives, such as alumni reunions or the alumni magazine, the focus is on the benefit to the individual involved, to network or reminisce on student days. The analysis of each stage of the relationship building cycle indicates the impact on *Ollscoil*. I employed three factors of interactive governance—diversity, dynamism and complexity—as a lens to view and analyse outcomes to the alumni relationship building outputs. To visualise the boundaries of outcomes, I created a continuum for each stage of the relationship building process, with different outcomes balanced between the tensions along this continuum.

Affiliation allows *Ollscoil* to segment alumni into cohorts, according to years and areas of study, geographic location and interests. By building comprehensive profiles of alumni, *Ollscoil* has at its disposal a wealth of contacts and networks with the potential to create opportunities for lifelong connections. Gathering more robust information on alumni, from employment records to committee memberships and other external affiliations, provides *Ollscoil* with a dynamic national and international network that is managed through the new alumni database. Alumni contribute to student recruitment and student retention, through IA-prompted activities. Alumni also participate in building future alumni groups and enabling both alumni and future alumni, to gain further understanding and appreciation of the valuable role of IA. In addition, honorary graduates represent instant affiliation giving *Ollscoil* the legitimacy and values of those bestowed with the honour. The continuum of outcomes at the affiliation stage stands balanced between preserving

the quality of the alumni community in a standardised and accessible way and expanding the quantity of alumni, both in size and scope.

Building affinity with alumni denotes the University's attempt to produce an informed public. By using a wide breadth of information, the IA offices are able to reach the broadest of interests in the alumni population. With limited IA resources, this strategy indicates creative ways to concentrate on an individual alumna interests. At *Ollscoil*, the alumni, by virtue of their graduation, are considered to be the ambassadors of the institution, even if they are not directly engaged in the institution. These alumni epitomise the institution, and any information to enhance their knowledge and evoke, or rekindle, the positive feelings about University is acknowledged by both *Ollscoil's* management and IA offices as a powerful marketing tool. The continuum for affinity outcomes is the fine balance between building on existing nostalgia and loyalty towards the institution, at one pole, and building new affinity controlled by the IA offices through alumni communications, at the other pole.

The research indicates significant engagement by alumni in IA organised events and services. *Ollscoil* alumni may still have planned ad hoc reunions or events on their own accord without the University, motivated by their interest in keeping in touch with each other. I suggest that by involving the University directly in this work, with IA as an organisational tool for alumni engagement, demonstrates the University's commitment to keep these alumni interested in the institution, offering widely inclusive events: inviting an entire graduating class, for instance, instead of a small group of former classmates meeting informally. The events coordinated through the IA offices are not steered by these past groups of friends or classmates, but create the conditions for networking and new connections for the future. *Ollscoil*

gains a captive audience for its message, through engaging alumni. On one side of the continuum, IA practice acts as the catalyst to create an active alumni population and, on the other side, IA tackles the challenge to understand what motivates alumni and sustains them in their engagement to the institution. The benefit of these interactions is the growing value alumni are placing on establishing new regional networks or holding events that allow even more people to re-engage with the institution. Engaged alumni become prominent and informed ambassadors for the institution while also lending legitimacy to the institution by participating in an *Ollscoil* event, underlining their association with the institution.

Support in the international IA context tends to focus on fundraising. At *Ollscoil* support is redefined to also include volunteering and involvement in initiatives that directly benefit the institution such as student recruitment or student mentorship. Fundraising remains at the education stage for most alumni, that is, alumni learning about the IA solicitation process. At *Ollscoil*, fundraising focuses on distinguished alumni and friends of business or cultural prominence who wish to “give back” to the institution. The interactions that come out from the support stage have a significant impact for the institution: private funding was responsible for many prioritised capital projects to enhance the student experience, such as the recreation centre. These types of facilities are showcased in the University’s communication materials as part of the overall well-rounded experience available to *Ollscoil* students. The continuum at the support stage focuses on change, as shown in Figure 18. Dynamic change, at one end of the continuum, is driven by the alumni with a desire to contribute to the institution while strategic change at the other end of the continuum focuses on the priorities of the institution, including identified areas of philanthropy.

6.2 Implications for the Main Research Question

To respond to the initial research question: *How has Institutional*

Advancement emerged in an Irish university setting to build relationships with alumni? I purposely designed the study and analysis to address the two main areas of inquiry: the link between the emergence of IA in an Irish university and the building of relationships with alumni. What has unfolded in the research is a wealth of data that demonstrates the evolving relationship between the institution and its alumni, with a growing role for IA practice to facilitate this process. The key word *how* is the crux of the question, essentially asking two questions: *What does IA look like at Ollscoil? How does Ollscoil apply IA to build alumni relationships?*

As noted earlier, on a basic level IA at *Ollscoil* looks like the practice in other universities following international standards. IA is still new and emerging, adopting its structures and practice from this national and international IA experience. The evidence shows IA emerged as a response to the impact of the higher education climate on the institution: from competition in the student market to the pressure for the diversification of funding. By adopting IA practice, *Ollscoil* has been able to forge a strong partnership with the alumni to respond to the pressures in the sector.

The strength of the alumni-University relationship is determined by the depth of this relationship. To determine the depth of the relationship, I devised the relationship-building cycle. Since the study is institution-focused, instead of determining quantitatively the stage of each individual within the cycle, I focused on the role of IA at each stage to progress alumni as they develop a lifelong relationship with *Ollscoil*. The data suggests distinctly that the majority of alumni are still at the affinity stage but moving steadily towards engagement by participating in IA-sponsored events.

Building relationships with alumni may be an incremental process for the individual, as the case study demonstrates, and at the same time it is a complex process for the University. The IA offices are expected to simultaneously manage multiple interactions with tens of thousands of alumni at different stages of the process. On the surface it would seem that building relationships with alumni is an end in itself. However building relationships with alumni using IA is a delicate balance between catering to the needs and understanding the motivations of alumni with providing an ultimate benefit to the institution. Therefore, the process of relationship-building has an underlying outcome at each of the four stages of the cycle which justifies the time and resources spent by *Ollscoil*.

The emergence of IA at *Ollscoil* is also experiencing “growing pains,” manifested as contradictions within the data: The three IA offices work interdependently but, at the same time also work independently; senior management commits itself to IA practice for the institution, but also focuses its interest on cultivating major *Ollscoil* donors; the priority of building the institution’s profile, but the reluctance by academic faculty to engage in media interviews. I contend that these contradictions stem from the theoretical rhetoric of the role of IA at *Ollscoil* and the interactions observed and reported at *Ollscoil*, that is, what is actually happening in practice. IA is still in its infancy at *Ollscoil* and the evidence suggests that the rhetoric, attitudes and interactions surrounding IA are slowly converging towards a dedication to IA practice. The investment in IA practice at *Ollscoil* has increased even over the period of the case study research as seen by the recent establishment of the CMU. With the investment comes the commitment from University management not to leave IA practice solely to the IA offices but to engage themselves in the process, and to support the IA offices in all their

endeavours (i.e. educating the wider public). The focusing on outcomes for the institution clearly illustrates the impact of IA towards the advancement of *Ollscoil*.

6.3 Significance of the *Ollscoil* Case Study

This case study represents the first in-depth research into Institutional Advancement in an Irish university context. CASE and the Alumni Officers Network of Ireland have recently conducted an in-depth survey of IA activity in Irish universities, quantifying the extent of IA activity. As a qualitative study into the emergence of IA, this study is unique in concentrating on the building relationships as the conduit towards the University's development. The purpose of *Ollscoil* as a single case study was not to provide generalisations of IA in Irish higher education, but to illuminate IA as an object of study. This case study gives practical examples in order to bring IA to life as it occurs in an Irish university setting.

6.3.1 Contributions to the Object of Study and Field of Inquiry

I was somewhat disappointed when I first gathered my secondary research on IA. I discovered that most of the resources available dealt with the operations of IA and were directed to an IA professional audience instead of an academic one. The academic studies on IA focused primarily on specific quantitative studies. I sourced a number of American theses on the topic of IA (Nailos 2009; Sturgis 2005; Dean 2007) and was equally disappointed to find out that the term IA continued to be treated as an understood concept and moreover, was not critically deconstructed. In these theses, IA was used as a vehicle to examine a particular aspect of IA practice in a specific university setting, with a primarily quantitative focus. In this study, IA is my object of study and I use *Ollscoil* as a vehicle to critically analyse the term.

Ollscoil enables me to slice the analysis of IA in different ways. Moreover, the case study demonstrates that IA carries immense complexity as a concept, a practice and an ethos. The impact of the external environment grounds the IA

concept in its reality. The State and market along with the international IA standards show *why* IA emerged at *Ollscoil*. The key characteristics of IA—*interdependence, integration, identification* and *inherence*—allowed me to sketch out exactly *how* IA operated in a university setting, embedded in the University's administrative and management systems. Most importantly highlighting the IA components—*communications, alumni relations* and *development*—reveals the interactions and involvement of University stakeholders with IA and the influence of IA on the operations, management and leadership of the institution. This study enabled me to develop frameworks for analysis of the IA concept, by using a case study to examine IA as it emerges, which allowed me to strip the concept down to its bare components and characteristics for analysis.

The second main aspect of this study entailed the analysis of the role of IA in the relationship-building with alumni. Again, I found that, by examining the IA literature and through my own preliminary analysis of case study data, a cycle emerged that I wished to retest on the *Ollscoil* data. The four stages of the relationship building cycle demonstrate a progression for alumni as individuals, and also a progression of outcomes for the institution. As the name suggests, the ultimate aim of Institutional Advancement is just that, advancing the institution.

IA as an alumni relationship-building tool has a narrow field of inquiry, honed to develop analytical frameworks in order to illuminate the case study. *Ollscoil* provided a vast amount of primary data. I systematically analysed the findings to bring to life the different stages of building alumni relationships and the associated outcomes of relationships at each stage of the process. Despite the fact that a single university was studied, it offered an adequate, manageable and accessible terrain to analyse alumni relationships as they progress.

The field of inquiry plays a key role in structuring the *input, output* and *outcome* section of the analysis, both in terms of experience, and also in terms of knowledge of the object of study. *Ollscoil* provides the source of investigation into the nuances of the emergence of IA, through the themes in the data, to build related IA frameworks and to then retest on the entire data set. At the *output* and *outcome* levels, the relationship building cycle with alumni was a combination of coming from the knowledge of the field and the literature and then using *Ollscoil* as the means to illuminate IA in the context. *Ollscoil* is the knowledge base for IA as a field of inquiry, narrowing the scope to the structures, practice, operations and attitudes of IA in this Irish university context. IA has the potential to be a broad field of inquiry but the focus tends to be on the quantitative elements of fundraising practice. I concentrated on the qualitative dimension of IA to illustrate examples of practice, structures and interactions that are otherwise taken for granted.

6.3.2 Reflections on the Study

IA is a “known unknown” in the Irish higher education sector. It is known because Irish universities have adopted IA practices as internationally defined and are striving to apply international standards. It is unknown because IA as a concept has not yet become part of common discourse usage in the Irish university , environment. *Development, communications, marketing, fundraising, and alumni affairs* are all common elements of advancement used in Irish higher education. Before conducting my primary research and in the early stages of my study, I placed a great significance on this known-unknown phenomenon of IA. This initial concern was addressed by devising analytical frameworks from the IA literature and employing heuristic devices to illustrate IA practice in the Irish context.

Under different personal and professional circumstances, I may have approached the study differently, collected different information and interacted more

with the alumni themselves. However, the abundance of data collected afforded me the information required to respond to the main research question, as well as the supplementary questions, and even to provide a realistic sense of *Ollscoil* through the vignettes at the beginning of each chapter. The purpose of these vignettes is meant to recast what is familiar or a taken-for-granted within a university context, such as a graduation ceremony, through a lens of Institutional Advancement. These vignettes also proved to be an effective way of illuminating alumni interactions and relationships at different stages of the process along with the subtle role of IA permeating in the background.

This research has brought me along a familiar journey. I have always supported my own *alma mater* in many ways and always advocated for others to do the same alluding to the infinite opportunities this simple connection could bring. This research has given me a deeper insight to see both the value of IA for the individual and for the institution. This study also enabled me to reflect on my view of IA and even challenged me in revising, widening and updating my view to include exciting new concepts and practice. Initially I was worried that IA practice was introduced in the Irish university sector simply as a fundraising tool, and was pleasantly relieved to find that fundraising is only an aspect of the support stage within the relationship building cycle. Moreover, I was intrigued to find that emphasis was placed on higher valued areas of support such as the giving of time by alumni to their *alma mater*.

6.3.3 Future Research

Over the past decade I have accumulated shelves full of IA resources that advocate the effective operations of professional advancement practice. After doing this study of building relationships with alumni, I noted a gap in the research: communicating the merits of IA to the wider public, that is, the benefit of

Institutional Advancement for Individual Advancement. This study of *Ollscoil* is institution-centric, that is, the research and findings concentrate on the value and impact of IA on the University itself. I attribute this focus to a sub-conscious link to my own background as an IA professional, working for a university to yield advancement from IA practice. I am also an alumna, and often see the potential benefit of IA practice on the individual. In my experience, I have noticed that alumni are sometimes cynical of a university's attempt to outreach to them, through events, reunions, services and other opportunities, correlating this attention to an automatic assumption to a link with asking for a donation. Simpson (2001) outlines a similar scenario demonstrating the difficulties that arise in the efforts made to engage alumni in their institution. If IA practice is an inherent aspect of a university system, I suggest that further research into the benefit and impact of IA practice on individual alumni could demonstrate how this critical mass, connected by the *alma mater* could find invaluable mutual benefits.

To organise my analysis, I devised a framework for building relationships with alumni, which I sharpened throughout my study. This relationship-building cycle could be explored further with a more extensive study, perhaps in a wider university context in Ireland or beyond. The stages of the cycle could also extend beyond individuals, to the roles of IA components themselves at each stage. There is potential for a larger study beyond a single case study to consider further adaptability. Again, since this study is limited to a single case study of an Irish university and with over forty higher education institutions in Ireland, research on the extent to which IA has emerged in Ireland could be illuminating, leading to recommendations, support mechanisms and even ways to view the development of IA specifically for the Irish higher education sector.

Can building relationships advance Irish universities? I am reminded of an article by Forman (1979) where he predicted that alumni relations would undergo three phases within an institutional setting: first, social involvement; second, programmes to engage alumni more meaningfully in the institution, and finally the process 'moving into the mainstream' (cited Rowland 1986b, p.140), with IA holding an influential role in supporting and steering of universities. Thirty years later, is his prediction right? Are alumni playing a key role in university life? If so, how and why? I see the potential for future study in exploring the extent of Forman's assertion.

6.4 Conclusion

The following quote from Professor Lord Anthony Giddens summarises the essence of my research:

The cultivation of alumni is crucial for every university today. Alumni should always regard themselves as part of the wider community which the university represents. Such connections have many mutual benefits. Alumni are able to keep in touch with the academic world and attend events at their university, while the university can acquire both moral and often financial support from those who have studied there. (Giddens 2001 cited Simpson 2001, p.97-98).

I often returned to this quote during my research, as a reminder of the focus of my study. This study has given me the opportunity to delve deeper into this alumni-university relationship, from the perspective of the institution.

IA at *Ollscoil* performs both a responsive and proactive function. *Ollscoil* is responsive and perhaps reactive towards the external higher education environment to focus on the needs of the institution. *Ollscoil* is in the initial stages of achieving a proactive strategy in building relationships with alumni. Even in the initial stages of this process, *Ollscoil* strives towards a holistic advancement of the institution to yield

a better university for the local community. IA, adapted from a familiar internationally concept, is applied as a conduit at *Ollscoil*, a means to an end.

To conclude, I present a final vignette from Queen's University Belfast:

July 2008

During a visit to Queen's University Belfast, my attention was drawn to a large stained glass window in the main entrance of the main Lanyon Building. This imposing window stood proudly displaying the university crest and motto and three figures. In the centre pane, the Latin words "alma mater," denote the link between student, graduate and the institution. (Gallo 2008, July 26)

It is particularly resonant that over a century ago, the centrality of the lifelong relationship between scholar and institution evoked such a strong visual image for the *alma mater*—the institution as the nurturing and nourishing mother. At *Ollscoil*, the relationship between alumni and the University is growing. The relationship presents reciprocal value for the alumnus and the institution: an alumna gains personal and professional value in the lifelong participation with *Ollscoil* while the University obtains legitimacy and strength in this alumna's commitment to build a better institution. The transformation of the institution through IA offers further opportunities to students and the community at large. The University, like a caring mother, by becoming increasingly active in Institutional Advancement practice, enables the nurturing and the interactivity of alumni towards the ultimate advancement of the institution; IA is the embers, alumni the flame and the University, the fire.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

EdD Thesis Research- Participant Information Sheet
Research conducted by: Ms Maria Gallo
October 2008- September 2009

Topic of Study: The role of Institutional Advancement in the relationship-management practices in an Irish university setting.

Purpose

Universities in Ireland, like those in North America and the UK, are establishing and increasing Institutional Advancement practice with marketing, outreach, external relations and fundraising activity. This research aims to explore Institutional Advancement as a relationship- management tool in an Irish university setting.

1. To map Institutional Advancement in an Irish university setting and how it is an emerging relationship-management tool
2. To analyse the role of Institutional Advancement as governance in the emergence of relationship management in an Irish university setting

Participation in the Research

It is up to you/ your organisation (if applicable) whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a copy of this form as informed consent. There is no prior preparation required.

By taking part, you will participate in a semi-structured interview (face-to-face or by telephone). A digital recording of the interview may be sought with your consent. Notes of the interview may be sent to you to ensure it is an accurate account of the meeting.

Benefits of Participation

This is an opportunity to participate in the study of relationship-building practice in Irish Higher Education. This research will form part of a Doctorate in Education (EdD) thesis.

Confidentiality

I intend to collect data for one case study of an Irish university including interviewing relevant stakeholders. This university will be kept anonymous and every effort will be made to ensure the university is not identifiable.

Case study data: All information collected about you, your organisation during the research will be kept strictly confidential. It may be necessary to change job titles, names and other identifying items to protect the anonymity of the individual and/or institution.

Research Details

This research will be part of a thesis for a Doctorate of Education (EdD), University of Sheffield. This research is self-funded by the researcher, Maria Gallo. The University of Sheffield provided an ethical review of this project.

Contact Information

Maria Gallo (EdD student) Telephone: +353 (0) 74 91 31126; +353 (0) 86 840 9949 or contact my supervisor Dr Simon Warren, University of Sheffield 0044 114 222 7002

Thank you for participating in this research.

CONSENT (for organisation/agency or individual interviews)

I, _____ (insert name) of _____ (insert organisation) have read fully the terms of this research and agree to participate.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Signed by Researcher: _____ Date: _____

NB: A signed copy of the Sheet will be kept by on file by the researcher as informed consent.

Appendix B: *Ollscoil* Field Notes Listing

Field Note (FN)Entry	Date	Purpose and Detail
FN-01	07/2008	Campus Walkabout- Arts Building, Old Buildings
FN-02	08/2008	Campus Walkabout- academic units, student residence quarter
FN-03	09/2008	<i>Ollscoil</i> Web site visit
FN-04	10/2008	Open Day (student recruitment event)
FN-05	10/2008	Conferring Ceremony (<i>Ollscoil</i> Graduation)
FN-06	11/2008	Management and administration buildings and Staff/Faculty café
FN-07	11/2008	Campus Walkabout and Library
FN-08	11/2008	Alumni Affairs Office and University Foundation building; Community Outreach facilities;
FN-09	12/2008	<i>Ollscoil</i> Canteen and café; Student services building

Appendix C: List of *Ollscoil* Documents (with pseudonyms)

Code	Type of Reference	Pseudonym <i>Ollscoil</i> Document/Source name	Year
1HP	Published Hard Copy	University Strategic Plan	2003
2HP	Published Hard Copy	Service Learning Newsletter	2008
3HP	Published Hard Copy	Fundraising Campaign Brochure	2003
4HP	Published Hard Copy	New Fundraising Campaign Brochure	2008
5HP	Published Hard Copy	Alumni Magazine 1	2007
6EP	Published Electronic Copy	Overview University Brochure	2003
7AVU	Unpublished PowerPoint	General Overview PowerPoint Presentation	2003
8HUI	Unpublished Hard Copy Internal	University Governance & Management Overview	2000
9HP	Published Hard Copy	Affinity Card Brochure	2008
10HP	Published Hard Copy	University Teaching Awards Brochure	2007
11EP	Published Electronic Copy	Internal Staff Newsletter	2008
12HP	Published Hard Copy	Internal Staff Newsletter 2	2008
13HP	Published Hard Copy	Internal Staff Newsletter 3	2008
14HP	Published Hard Copy	Alumni Magazine 2	2008
15HP	Published Hard Copy	Alumni Donors Circle Membership Brochure 1	2008
16HP	Published Hard Copy	Alumni Donors Circle Membership Brochure 2	2008
17HP	Published Hard Copy	Legacy Giving Circle Brochure	2008
18EP	Published Electronic Copy	Quality Assurance Review Guidelines	2007
19HP	Published Hard Copy	Open Day Brochure	2008
20HP	Published Hard Copy	Research Newsletter	2008
21HP	Published Hard Copy	Research Newsletter 2	2008
22WUI	Web Content Unpublished Internal	Internal Memorandum- Alumni Database (proposal)	2006
23HP	Published Hard Copy	Private bus company schedule	2007
24HP	Published Hard Copy	Career Office Brochure	2008
25HP	Published Hard Copy	Students' Union Diary	2008
26HP	Published Hard Copy	Health Promotion Student Services Brochure	2008
27EU	Unpublished Electronic Copy	President's E-mail on Electronic Alumni Magazine	2008
28HUI	Unpublished Hard Copy Internal	Alumni Association List of funded Student Societies	2008
29HU	Unpublished Hard Copy	Promotion on Alumni Association for Students	2008
30HUI	Unpublished Hard Copy Internal	Funding Guidelines for Student Societies	2008
31EP	Published Electronic Copy	Annual Report 2005- University Foundation	2005

Code	Type of Reference	Pseudonym <i>Ollscoil</i> Document/Source name	Year
32EP	Published Electronic Copy	Student Volunteer Programme ~ Brochure	2008
33WU	Web Content Unpublished	Web site News Article on 70s reunion	2008
34HU	Unpublished Hard Copy	Fees Protest Flyer	2008
35EU	Published Electronic Copy	Conferring Booklet	2008
36HUI	Unpublished Hard Copy Internal	New Strategic Plan (Draft)	2009
37WU	Web Content Unpublished	Alumni Reunion Invitation- Annual Reunion	2007
38WU	Web Content Unpublished	Alumni Reunion Invitation- Annual Reunion Spring	2008
39WU	Unpublished	American Alumni Event Invitation- Autumn	2008
40HP	Published Hard Copy	Undergraduate Student Prospectus- Short Version	2008
41HP	Published Hard Copy	Undergraduate Student Prospectus- Long Version	2008
42EP	Published Electronic Copy	Conferring Booklet 2	2007
43EP	Published Electronic Copy	Conferring Booklet 3	2006
44EP	Published Electronic Copy	Honorary Conferring Booklet	2006
45EP	Published Electronic Copy	Postgraduate Student Prospectus	2008
46EU	Unpublished Electronic Copy	Student Code of Conduct	2008
47EU	Unpublished Electronic Copy	University Sport Strategy	2008
48WU	Web Content Unpublished	Alumni e-newsletter- winter	2007
49WU	Web Content Unpublished	Alumni e-newsletter- spring	2008
50WU	Web Content Unpublished	Alumni e-newsletter- summer	2008
51WU	Web Content Unpublished	Alumni e-newsletter- autumn	2008
52HP	Published Hard Copy	Official campus map	2008
53HP	Published Hard Copy	Fundraising Campaign Update	2009
54EP	Published Electronic Copy	International Students Orientation Handbook	2008
55HP	Published Hard Copy	Adult and Continuing Education Prospectus	2008
56HP	Published Hard Copy	University-Community Arts Events Brochure	2008
57WU	Web Content Unpublished	Listing- Governing Authority Membership	2008
58WU	Web Content Unpublished	Listing- Alumni Association Membership	2008
59EU	Unpublished Electronic Copy	Equal Opportunities Policy	2000
60AVU	Unpublished PowerPoint	PowerPoint: University Governance and Committees	2008
61AVU	Unpublished PowerPoint	PowerPoint: Overview of University Services	2008
62AVU	Unpublished PowerPoint	PowerPoint: Overview of University Finances	2008
63EP	Published Electronic Copy	Students' Union Newspaper 1	2008

Code	Type of Reference	Pseudonym <i>Ollscoil</i> Document/Source name	Year
64HP	Published Hard Copy	Students' Union Newspaper 2	2009
65WU	Web Content Unpublished	Student Send-off invitation and promotion	2008
66WU	Web Content Unpublished	<i>Ollscoil</i> Alumni Group- Facebook page	2008
67WU	Web Content Unpublished	<i>Ollscoil</i> History- Overview of University	2006
68WU	Web Content Unpublished	<i>Ollscoil</i> History- Past Presidents Overview	2000
69AVP	Video Published	University's Promotional Video	2007
70HP	Published Hard Copy	Brand and Logo Guidelines	2008
71EU	Unpublished Electronic Copy	List of <i>Ollscoil</i> Merchandise	2007
72EU	Unpublished Electronic Copy	Guidelines for Good Research	2002
73HP	Published Hard Copy	Postgraduate Prospective Student Brochure	2008
74HP	Published Hard Copy	Undergraduate Prospective Student Brochure	2008
75HP	Published Hard Copy	Brochure of Campus of arts and music events	2008
76EP	Published Electronic Copy	Academic Strategic Plan	2003
77WU	Web Content Unpublished	International Student Testimonials	2008
78WU	Web Content Unpublished	Current Student Profiles	2008
79WU	Web Content Unpublished	Listing of Current Capital and Infrastructure Projects	2009
80HU	Published Hard Copy	Library Newsletter	2008
81WU	Web Content Unpublished	Regional Alumni event invitation	2009

Code Legend:

H- Hard Copy E- Electronic Copy

P- Published U- Unpublished

W- Web content AV- Audio Visual source

I- Internal, denotes information provided to the researcher that is not normally available to the general public

Appendix D: List of *Ollscoil* interviews

Code	Job Title (Pseudonym)	Interview Category	Interviewed
US-ID2	University Secretary	Strategic <i>Ollscoil</i> Administrators (2)	November 2008
DD-ID2	Director of Development (University Foundation)	<i>Ollscoil</i> IA staff (3)	November 2008
MAA-ID4	Manager of Alumni Affairs (Alumni Affairs Office)	<i>Ollscoil</i> IA staff (3)	November 2008
CMM-ID2	Communications and Marketing Manager (Communications & Marketing Unit)	<i>Ollscoil</i> IA staff (3)	November 2008
OM-ID4	Community Outreach Manager	Strategic <i>Ollscoil</i> Administrators (2)	December 2008
SUP-ID6	Students' Union President	IA stakeholders- strategic representatives (1)	December 2008
AOP-ID6	Administrative Manager, Strategic Planning (Office of the President)	Strategic <i>Ollscoil</i> Administrators (2)	December 2008
AGA-ID8	Alumni Representative- Governing Authority	IA stakeholders- strategic representatives (1)	January 2009

Interview categories

- 1- IA Stakeholders- strategic representatives
- 2- Strategic *Ollscoil* Administrators
- 3- *Ollscoil* IA Staff

Appendix E: Summary of Initial Themes from Primary Research

Code	Themes (Bold) & Sub-Themes
A	Newness of IA
A1	Blurring IA with / Describing IA as 'new managerialism'
A2	IA organisational structures- sharing resources
A3	IA organisational structures- isolated working in silos
A4	Internal perception of 'Problem solved' with new IA organisational structure
A5	IA- towards international IA standards
A6	<i>Establishing IA</i>
A7	<i>IA embedded in systems</i>
A8	<i>Towards IA as education (internal, public, alumni)</i>
A9	<i>Within the University: Resistance versus Consensus</i>
B	Commitment to IA
B1	Cultural Change within the University
B2	Historical legacy impact on University practice
B3	Role of IA and roles of others in IA activity
B4	Recognition of wider value of IA by University
B5	<i>Anchoring IA</i>
B6	<i>IA embedded in strategy</i>
B7	<i>Towards relationships across the university</i>
B8	<i>Understanding versus integration</i>
C	IA- Catalyst for change
C1	Steering strategy and strategic planning
C2	State policy in steering IA practice
C3	Role of IA in steering alumni relationships
C4	Change to University structures
C5	Change to reporting & decision making structures
C6	Value of rankings/ international league tables
C7	<i>Applying IA</i>
C8	<i>Embedded in governing change</i>
C9	<i>Towards building external and internal relationships</i>
C10	<i>Autonomy versus Partnership</i>
D	Impetus of IA
D1	Town & Gown Relationships
D2	Building alumni relationships- emphasis on value/benefit to alumni
D3	Building University's profile- emphasis on IA value/benefit
D4	2-way relationships (alumni and University) mutually beneficial
D5	<i>Realising advancement potential for University</i>
D6	<i>Embedded in stewardship</i>
D7	<i>Towards building lifelong alumni relationships</i>
D8	<i>Passive versus Active affinity</i>

Appendix F: Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

AONI	Alumni Officers Network of Ireland
AP	Atlantic Philanthropies
AAO	Alumni Affairs Office (<i>Ollscoil</i>)
Alumni	Former students and, in this study, graduates (fem. Alumnae); singular: Alumnus (fem. Alumna)
CAD	Canadian dollars
CASE	Council for Advancement and Support for Education, an IA professional network
CCAIE	Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education
CMU	Communications & Marketing Unit (<i>Ollscoil</i>)
DES	Department of Education and Science
Edd	Doctorate in Education, The University of Sheffield
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority, mediating public agency of the Department of Education and Science
Faculty	Academic staff members
IA	Institutional Advancement
IUA	Irish Universities' Association, the representative body for the seven Irish universities
NDP	National Development Plan 2006-2013, an Government programme building economic and social infrastructure, human capital and enterprise development
<i>Ollscoil</i>	Pseudonym for the case study university; Irish word for university
Open Day	An event organised at an Irish university primarily as a student recruitment event to attract prospective students to visit the campus
PRTL	Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, a State-funded research development programme for the Irish higher education sector
Regional Branch	An alumni network based in a country, region or city, facilitated by the university, usually with a local alumni contact
UF	University Foundation (<i>Ollscoil</i>)

Appendix G: Sample Interview Questions

The following are sample interview questions for my interview scheduled with the Students' Union President (SUP-ID6)

Questions in parentheses are potential follow-up questions

- 1- Tell me about your university experience to date. Why did you pick this university? [What influenced your choice? Is your situation unique- what do you think other students would say?]
- 2- To what extent are you and the Students' Union involved in campus events? [Open Day? Alumni reunions? Why is it important to have students involved?]
- 3- What role does the Students' Union have in the governing of the University?
- 4- What do you see as the major issues facing universities? What are some solutions?
- 5- What is the role of the University in the community and vice versa?
- 6- What do you suspect will be the relationship between yourself and the university after graduation? {What about for other students?} Why?

Appendix H: Excerpt from *Ollscoil* Field Notes (FN-01, 3-4)

FN-01

03-The campus is a marriage of old and new- old not necessarily in the Victorian and similar sense, but in the fact that there is a smattering of older buildings- look to be post-war, 1960s utilitarian buildings with other ones built since the turn of the century. There is a definite contrast between them- one is the dark, concrete and steel buildings, with faded signs, peeling paint and adjoining temporary buildings. The more recent additions to campus are airy, bright, filled with glass, beams, cathedral ceilings, and contemporary design. Plaques adorn all of the new buildings citing their funding sources- all National Development Plan funding with other logos like the HEA, the EU (Structural funds) along with support from more local development agencies. So while the design varies, the plaques acknowledging funding are almost all identical.

04-There is no shortage of construction on campus- to the outside observer wandering around, there is a flurry of this activity- probably also trying to get things ready for the new academic year. The temporary safety wall in wood is erected around a building site, and is painted an official university colour. There is a sign outlining the artist's rendition of the new building with the *Ollscoil* logo, and a list of contracted companies for the job- and the funding logos again. Other than the construction the campus in the summertime would be a very quiet place- mostly what seems to be staff more than undergraduate students.

Appendix I: Excerpt of Researcher's Diary (Learning Journal)

30/05/08: Institutional Advancement is a formula tried and tested throughout North America and has trickled its way into campuses across the globe. Why should this formula work elsewhere? What are the success factors to this formula and what are the impacts in universities around the world? Why follow IA? What will it achieve for the university? What is the benefit to following this pattern of IA? Why does this formula go unquestioned? What works in an international context? What is the rationale for following a North American model of IA? There are a lot of questions to consider the IA literature is so frustrating because everything is taken for granted.

I wish to take the Irish context as an example of how IA adopted in an Irish university. More questions: What are the results? What are the feelings and motivations for doing so? What does it achieve? Can it be done better? What are the expectations for setting up IA activity? What are the assumptions and understanding of IA in Ireland? What is the understanding of IA outside of the IA sector itself? Are Irish universities following 'the IA formula' without understanding the outcomes?

This is a lot to grapple with. I anticipate focusing on a number of these questions to get the answer. I hope to apply a case study of an Irish university to document and illustrate the practices of IA, critically analyse them in the context of IA hegemonic literature, but not without first outlining a critical analysis of Institutional Advancement literature and the formula that stems from this literature-not easy. I wish to demonstrate and critically discuss this disparity that has developed between the Irish university and IA: So much so that the term is not used nor is it discussed in its totality in Ireland.

What is it about the rhetoric of the word advancement that is not appropriate or used in the international or Irish context?

Appendix J: Excerpt from an *Ollscoil* Interview Transcript

This is an excerpt from the interview with the Manager of Alumni Affairs (MAA-ID4)

MG: Maria Gallo; MAA: Manager of Alumni Affairs

(1)

MG: What are the aims & objectives of the Alumni Affairs Office?

MAA: I'd like to think that our job is to keep the blood flowing through the alumni network, so that graduates have the opportunity to engage with each other and the University and that obviously means prompting events, prompting communications, and providing platforms for communications.

MG: Any examples?

MAA: Yes, reunions absolutely, one example is we are working on reunions supporting class of 1978/1979 reunion- you may have seen the blog?

(2)

MG: I did.

MAA: What's interesting with that is that it's a lovely model. Our standard reunion attracts last year attracted 550 alumni back to campus from the spectrum of 10, 20, 25, 30, 40 years out to the reunion and that particular class [1978] was badly represented. So one outstanding member of that class, who also happens to be a staff member and who happened to be active as Student Union President so that individual decided this wasn't good enough so he decided to beat bushes, rally the troops, send out his own press releases and create his own Web site and now we have 170 arriving this weekend- this is about half the size of what our alumni reunion would be. And there will be a series of programmes on - there will be a lecture from one of the star lecturers of the time. A very popular arts lecturer at the time will put on a comic lecture for them. So that's in terms of reunions- we are also working on Alumni Awards. These are for outstanding graduates so that we can be proud of them and we can showcase them so other graduates can be proud of them and think hey- I didn't know that...another way in which we engage alumni is through publications and communications are annual alumni magazine, I should give you a copy of it. I might just add that in terms goals as well of to support the fundraising efforts of the Foundation. Again, speaking in a metaphor: to prepare the ground so it is fertile for *Ollscoil's* fundraising efforts.

(3)

MG: That brings me to my next question: How does Alumni Affairs link with other aspects of external relations? I notice you are actually collocated with the Foundation Office.

MAA: Yes- I think that this is very important- this wasn't always the case or at least there was talk of moving us somewhere else, but thankfully it didn't happen. So yes, we are collocated but actually structurally we are independent- we are part of the University and the Foundation aren't. Yes we work together, increasingly closely. This has been helped by the fact that because of the structural difference sometimes

it can make it be difficult to match objectives, reporting lines, understanding, security, HR.

(4)

MG: Is the database shared between you and the Foundation?

MAA: Yes. I'm not sure how much of this interests you, but when we came on board, I noticed that we needed a database- this was one of the biggest problems, so this is what we set about doing so we brought the Foundation on board as a steering group partner and a working group partner as well. I'm not sure if they were as keen as I was but I presented a significant reasons for changing it and the significant investment, but nonetheless, we brought them on board and we worked with them to get funding from the University, so the University funded it but it was always understood that the Foundation would also use it.

MG: And was it a hard sell?

MAA: It was a year-long sell. It wasn't a hard sell because we had done our homework, it would have been was made clear that if we get the Senior Management Group on board and get the chance to present to them and have done our homework and we really did our homework .We would recommend that if anyone has a management information system, the project management team of *Ollscoil* did a lot of hand-holding- we really did put our best foot forward, it was right- if anyone didn't see it fit to fund it would have been painless.

(5)

MG: And the database is used to track and tag alumni?

MAA: Absolutely: Relationship management and profile building definitely. We're not there yet but it would be my ambition for the system that everything that we would do would be recorded in that one single repository. So there shouldn't be a need for supplementary files- there could be exceptions to this- but if there is say a press release so we do get electronic press cuttings that we tag them. It is difficult that when you are an office of 3 in terms of trying to organise ourselves that the database should begin to inform ourselves on what we do, we will be able to question of 'OK right, who's not getting talked to who hasn't been engaged in three years? Five years?' 'What geographic areas should we pay attention to?' So this should inform our practice other than just a filing cabinet for profiling people.

Maria Luciana Gallo
Goland
Ballybofey
County Donegal
Ireland
+353 (0) 74 91 31126
+353 (0) 86 840 9949

2272 Niagara Stone Road
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario
L0S 1J0
Canada
+1 905 468 4068
m.gallo@utoronto.ca