

Executive Summary

Bridging Professional Development Gaps in PACRAO Through Gamification

Prepared for the Pacific Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (PACRAO)

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether a gamified professional development platform could support skill development, knowledge application, and engagement among members of the Pacific Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (PACRAO). The project was developed in response to challenges commonly faced by regional professional associations, including geographic distance, limited budgets, competing professional responsibilities, and barriers to participation in traditional conference-based professional development.

To address these challenges, a prototype platform called *PACRAO University* was developed. The platform provided members with self-paced, scenario-based learning opportunities grounded in adult learning theory and professional practice.

Study at a Glance

- Community Partner: PACRAO
- Platform: PACRAO University
- Participants: 101 PACRAO professionals
- Methodology: Quantitative repeated-measures design
- Focus Areas: Skill Development, Knowledge Application, and Engagement
- Outcome: Strong participant engagement and support for continued exploration of gamified professional development

Project Overview

PACRAO University was designed as a gamified learning environment that combined realistic higher education scenarios, decision-making activities, immediate feedback, and progression-based gameplay. Participants engaged in professional situations aligned with AACRAO competencies in areas such as academic policy, records compliance, and operational management.

The study explored four primary questions:

- Does the platform support professional skill development?
- Does the platform support knowledge application?
- Does the platform encourage participant engagement?
- Is there a relationship between engagement and learning outcomes?

Key Findings

Engagement

Participants demonstrated strong behavioral engagement throughout the platform experience. Most participants completed the learning activities, interacted with feedback, and progressed through the scenarios as intended. These findings suggest that gamified professional development can successfully attract and maintain member participation in a self-directed environment, even when participation is not tied to job performance, compensation, formal recognition, or competition with other participants.

Skill Development and Knowledge Application

While statistical analyses did not demonstrate significant improvements in decision quality across the measured scenarios, participant performance patterns indicated meaningful variation in how individuals engaged with and benefited from the platform.

The findings suggest that learning may occur differently across participant groups and experience levels. The platform demonstrated potential as a professional development tool, though additional refinement and larger-scale implementation would be necessary to more fully evaluate learning outcomes.

Value to PACRAO

The study demonstrated that a gamified professional development platform may serve as a viable complement to PACRAO's existing professional development ecosystem.

Potential benefits include:

- Expanded access for members unable to attend conferences or live events.
- Flexible, self-paced learning opportunities available throughout the year.
- Increased opportunities for practical application and reflection.
- Scalable professional development that can reach members across a geographically diverse region.
- Data-informed insights into member engagement and learning needs.

Rather than replacing conferences, workshops, or existing programming, a gamified platform could extend PACRAO's professional development offerings and provide ongoing engagement between annual events.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered for PACRAO's consideration:

1. Continue exploring self-paced professional development opportunities that complement traditional conference programming.
2. Consider expanding *PACRAO University* into additional functional areas, including admissions, transfer articulation, strategic enrollment management, and leadership development.
3. Pilot shorter learning modules that allow members to engage with content in smaller, more manageable segments.
4. Use platform analytics to better understand member interests, participation patterns, and professional development needs.
5. Explore opportunities to integrate gamified learning into leadership development initiatives and committee engagement activities.

Conclusion

This study represents the first known formal evaluation of a gamified professional development platform within a regional AACRAO-affiliated association. While measurable gains in decision quality were not statistically demonstrated in this initial implementation, the platform successfully engaged participants and illustrated the potential for innovative, learner-centered approaches to professional development.

The findings suggest that gamified learning environments may provide PACRAO with a scalable and flexible mechanism for extending professional development opportunities beyond traditional conference-based models while supporting member engagement across the region.

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