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WOMEN'S COLLEGE ACCESS & MENTORING INITIATIVE (WCAMI)

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1. Background and Rationale

Despite progress in educational access, many women—particularly those from rural areas, low-income households, socioeconomically disadvantaged or first-generation backgrounds—continue to face barriers to entering and succeeding in higher education in Kosovo. These barriers may include limited information about admission procedures, insufficient family or community support, financial constraints, and gender-based stereotypes that discourage academic ambition.

To address these challenges, Universum International College's Women's College Access & Mentoring Initiative (WCAMI) provides a structured mentoring and support framework that encourages young women to pursue and complete higher education. The initiative combines access-oriented mentoring, skills development, community engagement and institutional support. It also complements the College's student-support arrangements by providing additional, targeted mentoring to enrolled students who demonstrate a need for further academic guidance.

The programme aligns with institutional and national gender-equality objectives and contributes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

2. Programme Vision

The programme aims to empower women to access, participate in and successfully complete higher education through personalised mentoring, community engagement, skills development and targeted support. It seeks to foster confidence, opportunity, academic progress and leadership.

3. Programme Objectives

- Enhance access to higher education for women, particularly those from underrepresented or disadvantaged communities.
- Strengthen academic and personal readiness among prospective female students through mentoring, guidance and training.
- Promote leadership, confidence and informed decision-making by connecting young women with mentors and positive role models.
- Provide additional, structured support to enrolled students who receive grades between 5 and 7, through mentoring delivered by professors, alongside the College's regular academic mentoring arrangements.
- Establish a sustainable network of mentors and mentees who can continue to support and encourage one another.

4. Target Groups

The primary beneficiaries are female students aged 16–22 who aspire to enter university. Priority is given to women from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, those facing gender-based barriers, and those with limited access to educational guidance. The programme may also be offered to adult women who were unable to pursue higher education after completing secondary school due to social, economic or gender-related barriers.

Within the College, the additional academic-support component is available to enrolled students who receive grades between 5 and 7 and may benefit from further guidance to strengthen their learning, address difficulties in particular subjects and improve their academic progress. This support is provided in addition to, and does not replace, regular academic mentoring.

5. Implementation Structure

UNI coordinates the programme through a designated Programme Coordinator, in cooperation with academic staff, relevant institutional units and, where applicable, partner schools and community organisations. The programme may operate in alignment with the academic year and be organised through individual mentoring, group sessions and thematic workshops.

Mentors are matched with mentees according to the purpose of the support, the student's needs and the mentor's relevant experience. For prospective students, mentoring focuses on access to higher education, applications, educational choices and personal readiness. For enrolled students requiring additional academic support, professors provide targeted guidance based on the student's learning needs and areas of difficulty.

6. Programme Phases

Phase I: Preparation and Matching
UNI identifies and prepares mentors, communicates the programme to prospective participants, selects or registers mentees, and matches participants with appropriate mentors. For the targeted support of students receiving grades 5–7, relevant academic information is reviewed in accordance with institutional procedures and applicable data-protection requirements.

Phase II: Mentoring in Action
Mentors and mentees participate in planned meetings and activities. Access-focused sessions may address goal setting, college options, admission requirements, applications, leadership and career planning. Professors providing targeted support to students with grades 5–7 work with those students to identify learning gaps, clarify difficult course content, develop effective study strategies and monitor progress. The frequency and format of these meetings are determined according to students' needs and available academic arrangements.

Phase III: Reflection and Evaluation
At the end of each programme cycle, UNI reviews participation, feedback and outcomes. The evaluation considers whether mentees achieved their objectives, whether students receiving targeted professor-led mentoring demonstrated progress, and what improvements should be introduced in the next cycle.

7. Mentoring and Support Components

The programme may include the following complementary forms of support:

- Access mentoring for prospective female students, including guidance on higher-education opportunities, admission procedures and applications.
- Academic mentoring provided through the College's established student-support arrangements.
- Additional professor-led mentoring for students receiving grades between 5 and 7. This targeted support is intended to help students overcome subject-specific learning difficulties, strengthen understanding of course material, improve study and assessment strategies, and make progress in their studies. It is provided in addition to regular academic mentoring.
- Personal development and leadership workshops designed to strengthen confidence, communication and decision-making.
- Peer-support activities and opportunities to connect with mentors and role models.
- Guidance resources, including a mentor handbook, mentee journal and relevant digital resources.
- Parent or family engagement activities, where appropriate and relevant to the access-focused component.

8. Institutional Roles and Governance

Universum International College hosts and coordinates the programme. A designated Programme Coordinator oversees implementation, communication, mentor–mentee matching and monitoring. Academic staff and professors contribute to mentoring in their respective areas of expertise. Relevant academic and administrative units support referrals, coordination and follow-up, while partner schools or organisations may assist in identifying prospective mentees and communicating programme opportunities.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The programme is monitored through appropriate indicators and periodic evaluation. Depending on the programme component, indicators may include:

- Number of participants and mentees enrolled in the programme.
- Number of mentoring meetings and workshops delivered.
- Participation and retention of mentees throughout the programme cycle.
- Feedback from mentees and mentors on the relevance and quality of support.
- For students receiving grades 5–7: participation in professor-led mentoring, follow-up of identified learning needs and changes in academic performance where measurable.
- Progression and application outcomes for prospective students participating in access mentoring.

Evaluation findings are reviewed by the responsible institutional units and may inform adjustments to mentoring arrangements, support resources and programme delivery. Student information is handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable institutional data-protection requirements.

10. Sustainability

UNI seeks to sustain the initiative by developing the capacity of mentors, encouraging continuing participation, maintaining relevant support resources and integrating programme activities into institutional student-support and gender-equality efforts. Feedback and evaluation findings are used to strengthen the programme over time.

11. Communication and Visibility

Programme information, activities and outcomes may be communicated through Universum International College's website, digital platforms and other appropriate communication channels. Communication should respect participants' privacy and obtain consent where personal stories, photographs or identifiable information are shared.

12. Expected Outcomes

- Improved awareness of and access to higher-education opportunities for women.
- Increased confidence, preparedness and leadership among programme participants.
- Stronger connections between prospective students, enrolled students, professors and mentors.
- Additional academic support for students receiving grades 5–7, helping them address learning difficulties and improve their academic progress.
- A more supportive and inclusive learning environment and a strengthened culture of mentoring at UNI.

13. Alignment with Institutional Priorities and the SDGs

The initiative supports Universum International College's institutional commitment to equal opportunity, non-discrimination, student support and continuous improvement. It is aligned with the College's Anti-

Discrimination Policy and relevant institutional strategies, and contributes to SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

14. Conclusion

The Women's College Access & Mentoring Initiative provides a structured framework for supporting women's participation in higher education through access guidance, mentoring, skills development and institutional collaboration. By complementing these activities with additional professor-led mentoring for students receiving grades 5–7, alongside regular academic mentoring, UNI reinforces its commitment to identifying students' needs, supporting academic progress and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

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