



# **Women's College Access & Mentoring Initiative (WCAMI)**

Formal Program Document

December, 2024.

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## **1. Background and Rationale**

Despite progress in educational access, many women—especially those from rural, low household income, low socioeconomic, or first-generation backgrounds—continue to face barriers to entering higher education in Kosovo. These obstacles include lack of information about access and admission processes, limited 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)** aims to create a structured mentoring ecosystem that empowers young women to pursue and succeed in higher education. The program aligns with national and institutional gender equity goals and supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality).

## **2. Program Vision**

This program's vision is empowering women to access, thrive in, and complete higher education through personalized mentoring, community engagement, skill development and upskilling—fostering confidence, opportunity, and leadership.

## **3. Program Objectives**

This program aims to reach the objectives listed below:

- 3.1. Enhance access to higher education for women, particularly from underrepresented communities.
- 3.2. Develop academic and personal readiness among female students through mentorship and training.
- 3.3. Foster leadership and confidence by connecting young women with successful role models.
- 3.4. Build a sustainable network of women mentors and mentees who continue to support one another.

#### **4. Target Group**

The primary beneficiaries of this project are female students aged 16–22 aspiring to enter university. Priority is given to women from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and those facing gender-based barriers or limited access to guidance in the process. Also, the program will be offered to adult women who did not have the opportunity to access college after finishing their high school due to social prejudices and gender role – based stigmas

#### **3. Implementation Structure**

UNI will implement this WCAMI cycle to run for nine months, aligned with the academic year (October–June).

Mentorship Model: A trained mentor is matched with one mentee. Group mentoring sessions and monthly thematic workshops reinforce learning and peer support.

#### **4. Program Phases**

The access mentoring program is divided into three phases or stages as follows:

**Phase I**: Select UNI mentors and trainers. (Months 1–2), select mentees through schools, conduct mentor training workshops, and hold an orientation session for families and participants.

**Phase II**: Mentorship in Action (Months 3–8)

Each month includes a focus theme and activity. Mentors and mentees have monthly group sessions covering goal setting, college options, applications, leadership, and career planning.

**Phase III**: Reflection and Transition (Month 9)

A final showcase and evaluation close the program cycle, recognizing achievements and integrating alumni mentees into the next mentor cohort.

## **5. Support Components**

The following components are necessary to provide appropriate support:

- Mentor Handbook
- Mentee Journal
- Digital Resource Bank (scholarships, college guides)
- Parent Engagement Workshops
- Peer Support Groups

## **6. Institutional Roles and Governance**

**Lead Institution:** Universum International College will host and coordinate the program.

**Program Management:** A Program Coordinator is appointed for the overall implementation and monitoring. Partner schools and NGOs nominate mentees.

## **7. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

For this initiative, indicators include: the number of mentees enrolled, college application rates, and mentor retention. Evaluation reports will be prepared mid-year and annually.

Quality Assurance Office follows up the standards indicators.

## **8. Sustainability Plan**

This program will train alumni mentees as future mentors, seek sponsorships, integrate into the Gender Equality Unit, and publish annual impact reports to maintain visibility.

## **9. Communication and Visibility**

The outcomes of this program will be shared with the branding: '**SheRises Mentoring Network**' — **Guiding Women. Growing Futures**. Program updates and stories will be shared through Universum International College's website, digital platforms and local media.

## 10. Expected Outcomes

Below are listed the expected outcomes of this project:

- Increased female enrollment in higher education
- Improved self-efficacy and leadership
- Creation of a network of female mentors
- Greater community awareness of women's education value.

## 11. Alignment with Institutional and SDG

This program aligns with Universum International College Anti- Discrimination Policy (2023- updated in December, 2024), Kosovo Education Strategy (2022-2026) and SDGs 4, 5, and 10.

## 12. Conclusion

The Women's College Access & Mentoring Initiative (WCAMI) offers a sustainable, gender-responsive framework for enhancing women's participation in higher education. Through mentorship, skills development, and institutional collaboration, the initiative fosters empowerment and leadership among women in Kosovo and beyond.

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