

STRATEGIC GOAL 6

Increasing the role of non-governmental organizations in ensuring the competitiveness of UzhNU

To ensure the competitiveness of UzhNU, it is necessary to synchronize the activities of both internal and external development factors, in addition to the aforementioned strategic goals for the future.

Among the internal factors are the democratization of management, respect for cultural and historical traditions, assessment of academic programs, quality of faculty, improvement of the organizational structure of Uzhhorod National University, and an increased role of non-governmental organizations.

It is well known that leading universities, in addition to self-development, also contribute to the development of their regions. The implementation of an integrated regional innovation strategy opens up significant opportunities for enhancing the competitiveness of the university and its region in global, regional, and national markets. This is achieved through the preparation of professionals capable of defending the national and economic interests of Ukraine in the conditions of global competition.

In addition to internal development orientations, including collaboration with community organizations, it is important to consider external factors that influence the institution's prestige and reputation on the international stage. This includes identifying trends in its development and opportunities for their realization in the international market, as well as assessing the competitive potential of the institution.

Therefore, the priority in selecting the strategy for international cooperation and strategic partners of Uzhhorod National University is defined as follows: membership in international consortia, associations, and societies; bilateral partnerships; participation of academic staff in international conferences, forums, and symposiums; conducting joint research projects; ensuring the quality of internationalized education; encouraging student participation in international programs, projects, and scientific activities.

Currently, UzhNU actively collaborates with 120 foreign partners based on international bilateral agreements, partnership agreements for implementing international projects, and for the purpose of supporting academic mobility under Erasmus+. Through agreements with foreign research institutions and higher education establishments, the main potential areas of cooperation have been identified, taking into account the strengths and needs of the partners.

In April 2015, with the aim of internationalization, the International Consortium of Universities was established based on Uzhhorod National University, which includes 18 Ukrainian and foreign higher education institutions.

The accession of UzhNU to the Magna Charta Universitatum in September 2018 was of great importance for further integration into the European scientific space. The Magna Charta Universitatum brings together over 80 leading universities worldwide, and it establishes the fundamental values, rights, and responsibilities of a university as a key institution in society.

In the report by Rector Prof. Smolanka V.I. on the results of UzhNU 's activities in 2022, the active role of student self-government in the university's scientific activities was highlighted. In particular, the scientific activities of young researchers and students are an integral part of the university's research work, contributing to the development of readiness among future professionals for the creative implementation of acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies. It also facilitates the mastery of research methodology and provides research experience. The coordinating bodies for organizing the research work of young researchers and students at Uzhhorod National University are the Council of Young Scientists and the Scientific Society of Students, Postgraduates, and Doctoral Students.

Increasing the role of non-governmental organizations in ensuring the competitiveness of the University will actively contribute to the implementation of social innovations in the public life of Transcarpathia.

This is evidenced by the activities of the Innovation and Development Center (IDC), the Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), and the Center for Gender Education (CGE).

The Innovation and Development Center monitors relevant grants, collaborations, competitions, internships, training sessions, workshops, and public communication events such as conferences, roundtable discussions, expert debates, seminars/webinars. The monitoring results are compiled into digests and also shared on the 'Educational and Scientific Events' Google Calendar, 'Deadlines and Start Dates' Google Calendar, and 'Educational and Scientific Events Map' Google Map.

In response to the challenges associated with the Russo-Ukrainian war, the IDC has put forth a range of proposals regarding the organization of the educational process, pedagogical and scientific work, as well as assistance to internally displaced persons, particularly teachers and students who have been evacuated to Uzhhorod. This includes initiatives such as fundraising by the UzhNU Volunteerism group to support internally displaced persons residing in UzhNU dormitories, the development of questionnaires and surveys for internally displaced persons residing in Uzhhorod University dormitories to identify their current needs, and the mobilization of assistance for internally displaced persons in the form of food, hygiene products, medications, and household appliances through collaboration between the UzhNU Volunteerism group and the NGO 'Public Holding 'GROUP 90 INFLUENCE.' Additionally,

awareness-raising events for school students on the importance of volunteering are organized.

To support the implementation of international and state programs for sustainable development and to enhance research activities in this field, the Center for Sustainable Development has been operating at Uzhhorod National University since 2015. In 2022, the main achievements of the CSD include participating in the development of the Concept of Sustainable Development for Uzhhorod National University, coordinating the 'Planet Greening' campaign in the Transcarpathian region, and tree planting in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Transcarpathian region (spring 2022). Representatives of the CSD have participated in two major international events organized by HWPL (Organization 'Heavenly Culture, World Peace and Restoration of Light') at the UN ECOSOR), in particular, in those dedicated to the 8th anniversary of the HWPL peace summit on the topic 'Institutional peace: the basis for sustainable development', conferences on the topic: 'I want to change the world. What now?'

With the onset of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war, the CSD has engaged in weaving camouflage nets and manufacturing trench candles for the Ukrainian Armed Forces and other defense forces. It has also co-organized research to identify the problems and needs of internally displaced persons (in collaboration with the All-Ukrainian Initiative 'Active Community' and the sociological company Active Group) and conducted communication and leadership training for various groups of citizens throughout the year.

In 2022, Uzhhorod National University approved the Gender Action Plan on implementation of gender-sensitive initiatives and measures for 2022-2024, developed under the coordination of the Center for Gender Education of UzhNU. The goal of the Gender Action Plan is to consider gender aspects and implement a gender approach in the activities of Uzhhorod National University, as well as to create a gender-sensitive educational environment at all levels and in all areas of the institution's life.

After February 24, 2022, in response to the new challenges of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the team of the Center for Gender Education (CGE) together with female deputies from various levels of councils and activists from women's organizations in the Transcarpathia region organized visits of 'women's diplomacy' to neighboring countries, specifically 12 countries in Central and Western Europe, 19 town halls and municipalities. They participated in 47 actions in support of Ukraine and met with Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassadors, Consuls, and representatives of 8 countries worldwide.

Throughout 2022, the CGE team participated in events related to the update of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution

1325 ‘Women, Peace, Security’ for the period until 2025 (the National Action Plan was updated on December 16, 2022). UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, is one of the most important resolutions of the UN Security Council in the field of security policy. On December 23, 2022, the CGE joined the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation within the localization of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 ‘Women, Peace, Security’ for the period until 2025 and became part of the newly formed Coalition 1325-Transcarpathia.

Since 2017, the International Alumni Association of Uzhhorod National University has been operating within the UzhNU, progressively enhancing the competitiveness of UzhNU by establishing separate branches of the organization outside of Ukraine.

The primary goal of the International Alumni Association of UzhNU, as stated in its Statute, is to unite the efforts of graduates from all generations for the development of Uzhhorod National University, the preservation and enhancement of its traditions and spiritual values, and the protection of legitimate social, economic, creative and other interests of its members.

The Association's objectives include addressing the issues of preserving and ensuring the continuity of traditions and spiritual values among the university's graduates, creating opportunities for communication among graduates, students and faculty, facilitating information exchange among alumni, enhancing the prestige of the university as a leading educational institution of global significance, conducting ongoing monitoring of opportunities to attract talented youth from school graduates for education at the university, as well as their employment after obtaining higher education, facilitating the acquisition of grants, charitable and targeted funds, and property by the university, which are provided free of charge by Ukrainian and foreign charitable organizations and individuals, and supporting the resource provision of educational, scientific, technological and cultural projects of the university.

The organization has implemented a systematic approach to various aspects of its work. Specifically, focused efforts have been made to establish separate branches of the Association within and beyond Ukraine. Contacts have been established with graduates working in Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Austria, and Germany. Branches of the Association have successfully commenced activities in several European Union countries, the United States, and Israel.

Preparatory work has started to revive the recreation bases of ‘Skalky’, ‘Plishka’ and ‘Kolochava’. A concept is being developed for the creation of a scientific, informational, recreational and cultural center at UzhNU through the reorganization of existing facilities and sanatoriums that have fallen into decline due to lack of funding.

It is gratifying that our graduates, who are prominent scientists at universities in EU countries and the United States, actively respond to the Association's initiatives for collaboration. Many of them have offered assistance with issues related to the training and internships of UzhNU masters and postgraduate students at leading laboratories in European and American universities. This idea is successfully being implemented by Dr. I. Eisenberg, a Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and a professor at Manhattan College in the United States. However, there are still many questions regarding the involvement of veteran graduates in working with school youth and attracting the best students to the university. Several other intriguing projects of the Association are currently being addressed.

The main long-term tasks of the International Alumni Association are as follows:

- Facilitating the implementation of educational, scientific, socio-economic and industrial development projects of the Uzhhorod National University.
- Enhancing the prestige of the university as a leading educational institution of global level.
- Establishing continuous effective communication with the university graduates, including those living and working abroad. Strengthening the material base of the university and obtaining opportunities for financial support from European, international funds, and others.
- Creating a database and conducting monitoring of professional achievements of the university graduates.
- Conducting continuous monitoring of opportunities to attract talented youth among school graduates for studying at the university, as well as their employment after obtaining higher education.
- Strengthening the university's ties and relations with other educational institutions in Ukraine and foreign countries, promoting resource provision for scientific, technological, cultural, and educational projects of the university.
- Facilitating the university's acquisition of grants, charitable and targeted funds, as well as assets provided by Ukrainian and foreign charitable organizations and individuals.
- Promoting cooperation between the university and the International Consortium of Universities.
- Establishing contacts and exchanging experiences with Alumni Associations of other educational institutions, including those abroad.

The implementation of the outlined prospective tasks includes the following directions:

1. Strengthening the centers of community organization in the new administrative-territorial structures of the region. The basis for this work, in our opinion, should be the education departments in the local self-government bodies along with the heads of general education schools. This will contribute to establishing closer ties with future students of UzhNU. Efforts will continue to strengthen and expand the Association beyond Ukraine's borders, as well as involve former graduates in practical assistance to the university, both in scientific and material terms.

2. Activating the participation of all faculties of the university in the Association's work. It may be worthwhile to include representatives of the faculties in the composition of the Board, who will coordinate this work. It is necessary to complete the establishment of a database of graduates at each faculty, utilizing the experience of the Dean of the Faculty of Physics, Volodymyr Lazur.

3. The priority task is to unite the efforts of the Association and the university graduates who live and work in the territorial communities of the region with the authorities of state power and local self-government in order to create a recreational-rehabilitation center for participants of military actions and veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) based on the 'Skalka' sanatorium-preventorium and the highland biobase 'Kolochava'.

4. It would be beneficial for members of the Council and the Board of the Association to visit the districts of the region to provide constructive assistance in organizing the centers and their work.

5. A strategically important direction for the Association's work is to establish a strong center in Kyiv, where a significant number of our graduates work, holding influential positions in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Constitutional Court, the Accounting Chamber and the departments of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

The implementation of these tasks will contribute to enhancing the role of non-governmental organizations in ensuring the competitiveness of Uzhhorod National University in the perspective until 2032.