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Report on Alumni Engagement

International Business College
Mitrovica (IBC-M)

Mitrovica
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Summary

Kosovo's alumni scene has seen steady growth over recent years, creating opportunities for knowledge-sharing, networking, and community building. The active participation of alumni in various sectors is playing a significant role in the country's socio-economic development. This document offers a comprehensive overview of alumni engagement in Kosovo, with a specific focus on the International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M), exploring the idea of creation of the Alumni Club at IBC-M and the positive implications it would bring to the institution.

1. Introduction

Alumni engagement in Kosovo has always been a less emphasized aspect of higher education, due to a range of factors, from socio-political instability to the relatively recent development of the higher education sector. With increasing globalization and the influence of western education models translated to Kosovo, the benefits of an active and engaged alumni network have started to be recognized. Many Higher Education institutions have initiated programs to strengthen their relationships with alumni, by implementing numerous alumni initiatives aimed at maintaining a lifelong connection between graduates and their alma mater.

The alumni system and their engagement in Kosovo was not explicitly addressed in national law/regulations, except to some extent in Article 33 of the Law No.04/L-037 on HE in the Republic Kosovo (<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2761>) that foresees the creation of students organizations by the Higher Education Institutions, that would represent students and contribute to fulfilment of their social, cultural, academic and the entertainment requirements, with those Institutions contributing financially to the establishment of such student organizations, including costs for premises and environment.

In this context, the law mandates public higher education institutions to financially support the creation of these student organizations, providing them with the necessary funding to establish and maintain their activities, but while this law addresses the needs of students currently enrolled in higher education, it does not seem to explicitly address the needs of alumni, hence the initial mention of the alumni system not being addressed explicitly in the national law or regulations.

But it is possible that such student organizations might indirectly contribute to the establishment of alumni networks, as these organizations often form the foundation for continued relationships between students after they graduate. Without explicitly being mentioned in the law or other regulations, there may not be structured support or guidance on how these organizations transition into alumni systems post-graduation.

Instead, the alumni networks find their roots mainly through engagement in international programs and projects, primarily dedicated to higher education capacity development. An example of such programs is the Transformational Leadership Program – Scholarships and Partnerships, financed and supported by the USAID, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, implemented by World Learning in collaboration with the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Young Cell Scheme that is financed by EU and co-financed by Government of Kosovo and numerous ERASMUS + projects like "Entrepreneurial Universities for Industry Alliances- EUFORIA", which contains the alumni component in its career software part, or AI4Life currently being implemented by the EU and Western Balkans partners, aiming at strengthening students engagement, universities growth and competitiveness, through involvement of alumni in teaching processes, industry and teaching and research at Higher Education Institutions.

Various Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo are beginning to appreciate the multi-faceted benefits of alumni engagement. These benefits span across the lifecycle of the student's experience, influencing not just their time at the institution, but also their career and personal



development post-graduation. Kosovo's HEI institutions have started initiating programs that look to build lifelong relationships with alumni, aiming to maintain the ties, while concurrently providing an avenue for alumni to contribute back to their institutions.

One of such examples are the Career guidance Centers that are slowly gaining popularity, where institutions connect students with alumni who can provide insights about potential career paths and opportunities in specific fields, helping students to broaden their horizons and view their education in a real-world context. Another alumni involvement aspect focuses on promoting opportunities for their involvement in research, and teaching, where alumni provide a valuable resource for new research ideas and collaborations, guest lectures, workshops, and even provide strategic guidance for university policies based on their professional expertise. The shift towards a more alumni-centric approach in Kosovo is a promising trend, reflecting the European best practices exemplified by institutions that are AL4Life EU partners - University of Bologna, Autonomous University of Madrid, and University of Ljubljana, making it an indication of the maturing higher education sector in Kosovo, increasingly aligning itself with international standards and practices.

Table 1. Benefits and Challenges from Alumni Capacity Building in Kosovo

Benefits	Challenges
Enhanced networking among graduates	Difficulties in tracking and maintaining updated alumni data
Creation of a platform for job opportunities and mentorship	Limited resources for managing alumni relations
Stronger relationships between institutions and alumni	Lack of culture of alumni engagement
Increased visibility and reputation of institutions through successful alumni	Balancing the expectations of alumni and the institution
Enrichment of student experience through real-world insights from alumni	Diverse and dispersed alumni base, making engagement initiatives challenging
Lifelong learning opportunities for alumni through continued association with the institution	Lack of dedicated staff and structure for alumni relations

2. Alumni situation with International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M)

The International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M) has been at the forefront of alumni engagement in Kosovo. The college understands the importance and benefits of maintaining an active relationship with its alumni and has implemented several initiatives to facilitate this.

Back In 2016, IBC-M started working on creating its own Alumni center as a component of the Students Representative Council with the idea to cultivate a network comprised of graduates, current students, and any other individuals that might be interested, fostering, and maintaining meaningful relationships and communication, and building avenues for collaboration, business opportunities and research. The IBC-M Alumni center's office was planned as part of the Students Representative Council, stationed within the IBC-M library, but no official decision regarding the IBC-M alumni center has been made to this point.

This was partly because the Alumni center structure hasn't been fully addressed, largely due to the organizational changes that have occurred as IBC-M transitioned from being a private institution to a public entity. During this transition period, certain priorities and processes have been altered and temporarily paused, leading to a delay in the development of the alumni center.



Back in 2016, as part of the initiative to create an Alumni center, IBC-M and its Quality Assurance department conducted a survey receiving feedback from the first, second and third generation of IBCM bachelor graduates related to their pre- and post-graduation experience, satisfaction with IBC-M curriculum, their preparedness for engagement in workforce and employment opportunities.

Key findings revealed high satisfaction rates with IBCM experience (6.17 out of 7 on the Likert scale), with the majority recommending IBCM to their networks. Confidence in skillsets for starting a business scored slightly lower at 5.71 out of 7, indicating room for improvement in the curriculum. Employment figures were initially inconclusive due to the relatively low response rate. Follow-up calls by the Student Service office uncovered that 78.38% of IBCM alumni were either employed or pursuing advanced study. Employment was spread across various sectors, with private sector engagement being the highest (53.5%). Most alumni found their jobs through social contacts (35.20%) and online job advertisements (29.60%). The survey also revealed a high interest among alumni in ongoing college events, such as career fairs and workshops. Feedback on areas for curriculum enhancement to better prepare alumni for the workforce was also received and was considered in future curriculum development and reviews and training designs.

One of the primary ways IBC-M engages its alumni is through networking events. These are structured to foster connections between current students, alumni, and potential employers. Moreover, IBC-M hosts an annual "Alumni Day," where former students are invited back to campus to share their experiences, insights, and career paths with the current student body.

IBC-M Alumni Network includes alumni from all generations, who actively participate in yearly Alumni Days. The events will continue an event for alumni to come together and share their experiences with the current IBC-M students. This is especially important, as IBC-M Alumni Network include graduates from different ethnic backgrounds and many prominent jobs, including international ones. Alumni Days are organized every year.

2.1. Keeping track

2.1.1. Facebook page

In addition to the various strategies and mechanisms that IBC-M developed over time to stay connected with its alumni, social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have played a significant role. IBC-M maintains a dedicated Facebook page titled "IBCM Alumni Association" as an integral part of its alumni outreach efforts.

With 150 members currently, this Facebook page serves as an alive online community where alumni from different areas of life reconnect, share their professional journeys, exchange ideas, and explore career opportunities. The "IBCM Alumni Association" Facebook page is a valuable tool for IBC-M to share updates, promote events, celebrate achievements, and disseminate useful information. It serves as an easily accessible, user-friendly platform for alumni, providing a space for them to stay in touch, no matter where their post-graduation paths may have taken them. While the number of members is currently at 150, the goal is to consistently grow this number by regularly reaching out to alumni, inviting them to join the page, and actively engaging with them once they do. "IBCM Alumni Association" Facebook page underscores the college's recognition of the vital role that social media plays in today's world, as a tool for communication, community-building, and professional networking.

Facebook link - [IBCM Alumni Association](#)



2.1.2. Alumni simple format database

Even though the IBC-M's Alumni Center is still in development and not operational, the Students Service department tracks data on alumni, and keeps them in the college's database in electronic format. Currently, IBC-M's electronic database registers a relatively small number of 48 alumni. This low count may be attributed to several factors such as recent establishment, the alumni's unfamiliarity with the system, or inadequate dissemination of information about the alumni registration process. Despite the fact that the IBC-M's Alumni Center has yet to become operational, the Student Services department diligently tracks alumni data and preserves it in the college's database in an electronic format. This is an active and ongoing process, aiming to gradually expand the number of registered alumni and enrich the database with their vital information.

This electronic database, apart from containing alumni's personal identification information like names, also includes the course or field they graduated in, their current employer, and the position they hold. Over time, with better outreach and promotion, it's expected that more alumni will register, thereby enhancing the depth and reach of IBC-M's alumni network.

Public- government, municipality, advisors, embassies, directorates, researchers/science publications/ professors in other schools, universities or College's				
Name	Surname	Spur	Institution	Position
Dzenita	[REDACTED]	EAM	Ministry of Agricultur, Forestry and Rural Development	Political Adviser to Ministe
Natasa	[REDACTED]	PSM	Kosovo Government	- Chief of Cabinet/ Senior Political Advisor at Ministry of Communities and Return
Igballe	[REDACTED]	ISM	Municipality Mitrovica South	Finance Director
Flamur	[REDACTED]	EAM	Kosovo Accreditation Agency	Senior Officer
Tringa	[REDACTED]	PSM	ASK- American H. School	Lecturer
Denis	[REDACTED]	ISM	ASK- American H. School	HR-Manager
Hadis	[REDACTED]	PSM	Universum College	Project Coordinator
Marigona	[REDACTED]	ISM	British Council Kosovo	Teacher- Trainer
Faruk	[REDACTED]	ISM	Swenian- Kosovo Pension Fu	Office manager
Dragana	[REDACTED]	PSM	Municipality Gračanica- "Vena	Lawyer
Erza	[REDACTED]	PSM	Heimerer College	Consultant / Trainer in Health Research and Innovation
Damir	[REDACTED]	ISM	Municipality Gora	Procurement Manager
Private sector, private businesses, banks and NGO's (Directores,				
Name	Surname	Spur	Institution	Position
Marigona	[REDACTED]	PSM	Initiative for Human Rights	Executive Director
Antigona	[REDACTED]	ISM	Kosovo Center for	Executive Director
Egzon	[REDACTED]	ISM	Initiative for Agricultural	Project Manager
Erolina	[REDACTED]	ISM	Business of Kosovo	Project Manager
Edlira	[REDACTED]	ISM	KCSF	Grands Officer
Edita	[REDACTED]	ISM	Banka Kombetare Tregtare	SME specialist
Blerinda	[REDACTED]	ISM	Botanic-Ilc	Founder and managing
Mirjeta	[REDACTED]	ISM	KEP Trust	Branch Manager
Egzon	[REDACTED]	ISM	Business Support Center D&	Business Consultat and
Valid	[REDACTED]	ISM	Scopic Software	HR- Specialist
Abide	[REDACTED]	PSM	PLAY International Kosovo	Project Coordinator
Berna	[REDACTED]	ISM	NGO Building the Balkans	Director
Admir	[REDACTED]	PSM	GIZ	Office Manager
Elvira	[REDACTED]	ISM	Softwar company GrowthLea	Project Manager
Edona	[REDACTED]	ISM	Softwar company GrowthLea	Office
Egzon	[REDACTED]	ISM	Agricultural Development Agen	Inspector
Fatbardha	[REDACTED]	ISM	VIPrint	HR Officer
Gezim	[REDACTED]	ISM	Emona Group - INTERX	Manager
Gjilisha	[REDACTED]	EAM	WIZR, a Norwegian compan	HR-Manager
Venhar	[REDACTED]	EAM	Global Work and Training Agen	Chief Executive & Founde
Mehment	[REDACTED]	ISM	NETXIO	Program Officer
Suncica	[REDACTED]	PSM	RNATIVNA™ -Medial portal,	Program Director
Jelisaveta	[REDACTED]	EAM	GIZ	Advisor
Stevan	[REDACTED]	ISM	ize Holdings Boca Raton, F	Management Trainer
Ilvana	[REDACTED]	ISM	is rs -Economic portal-Belo	Sales Manager

Figure 1. Screenshot of the database page of IBC-M alumni



3. Digital approach to alumni networking and engagement

3.1. Alumni management software

IBC-M is proactively investing in the enhancement of its Alumni engagement through strategic digital initiatives. One of the key components of this strategic development is the creation of a dedicated module within its University Management Software. This represents a significant step forward in the institution's comprehensive alumni strategy, acknowledging the central role that technology plays in fostering connections and communication in today's digitized world.

The new module will be designed to seamlessly integrate with the existing University Management Software, adding an innovative layer that specifically caters to the needs of the alumni community. Its primary objective is to enhance the functionality of the current alumni management process. The aim is not only to increase the number of registered alumni from the current count of 48 but also to encourage greater interaction and participation amongst the alumni. The software module will serve multiple purposes, including the promotion of alumni events, fostering networking and mentorship opportunities, facilitating career services, and offering an easy access point for alumni to stay informed about the latest developments at IBC-M. By implementing this, IBC-M intends to bridge any existing gaps between the institution and its alumni, and to foster a dynamic, interconnected community, allowing IBC-M to store, organize, and manage detailed information about its alumni in a more structured and efficient manner. Data such as personal identification, course completed, current employer, and job position can be easily stored, retrieved, and updated. This enhanced data management capacity is intended to help IBC-M gain valuable insights about its alumni community, and better tailor its services and offerings to their needs and interests.

4. IBC-M alumni strategic development

Following are the key points that IBC-M plans to undertake in improving the alumni status:

Alumni Strategy Development (2023-2028): IBC-M plans on developing an alumni strategy encompassing an action plan and relevant policies for integrating alumni into colleges' structures. The strategy will cover key principles, strategic goals, vision, and mission for alumni engagement.

Curriculum Adaptation: The college plans to adapt teaching materials and course catalogues, leveraging the professional experience of distinguished alumni from specific industry sectors. The aim is to increase the relevance and real-world context of the curriculum.

Career Centre and Alumni Association Cooperation Plan: The college seeks to create an action plan for integrating the career center and alumni association to enhance student employability. This plan will define the integration rules and anticipate activities that the two entities will undertake collaboratively.

Alumni Management Software: As above, IBC-M plans to install and use dedicated alumni management software with an embedded alumni database for efficient tracking and interaction with its alumni.

College-Alumni Communication Plan: The college intends to create a communication plan that encourages interaction between the college and its alumni, facilitated by the alumni association. Successful branding and identity building are crucial to this process.