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**AL4Life** ↗



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# Report on alumni engagement at the University of Montenegro

Podgorica

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## Project Information

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## I. General overview

Alumni are an institution's most loyal and most valuable stakeholders, who can provide various benefits – both material and non-material. As former students, who have continued their careers and professional engagement, they can assure various fundraising prospects, but beside that, alumni generate invaluable word-of-mouth marketing among their social and professional networks. Engaging alumni has been recognised as the tool for strengthening higher education institutions by mobilizing the skills and experience of their former successful students. Alumni can help with global admissions and recruitment efforts, career and professional development, local and state advocacy or lobbying, and through their generous philanthropic support.

The involvement of alumni fits well in the realization of certain needs and goals that have been identified in several strategic documents of the Montenegrin HE system:

- The **Strategy for the Development of HE of Montenegro**, issued by the former Ministry of Education in 2016, identified the following as some of its main goals: improving the quality of HE and creating competitive academic staff and students, aligning education with labour market needs, strengthening the links between science, education and economy, improving scientific-research work, internationalization of HE;
- The **Strategy for Scientific-Research Activity** issued in November 2017 by the former Ministry of Science defined the following three strategic goals: development of human resources and research capacities, improving international cooperation and networking, and strengthening synergy between science and economy;
- **Montenegrin Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning (2020-2024)** defines the objectives such as the increase of practical content in teaching, improvement of specific entrepreneurial knowledge and skills through specialized trainings, increase of the number of employers where students would perform practical work, and in general establishing various types of university-business cooperation. According to the survey conducted in Montenegro in 2019 by the Institute for Social and Education Policy, only 27.6% of graduates believe that after graduating from faculty they are sufficiently trained to start their own business;
- **CONGRAD Tempus project**, carried out in 2014, implemented a system of collecting data on alumni in HEIs in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Initial research on graduate students was conducted, followed by interpretation of findings and report writing, in order to improve the strategic management and self-evaluation capacities of these institutions;
- Within the **Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness project**, implemented by the Montenegrin Government, a tracer study was carried out in 2017, encompassing 3.632 i.e. 62,5% of recently graduated students from Montenegrin HEIs - the study quantitatively identified and presented the shortcomings and gave the following recommendations in that regard: to further promote the opportunities for scholarships from companies, increase practical contents within lectures and exercises, introduce and/or strengthen practical work during studies, broaden the ways of cooperation with employers for the purpose of better employability of students, motivate students to search for work during their studies, further stimulate entrepreneurship during studies and motivate students for self-employment, further adapt the study programs to the needs/requirements of the labour market. In order to address all the mentioned recommendations, AL4LIFE project will provide a new model of connecting HEIs and business sector, with alumni being the essential element of that process.



European University Association, as part of their Institutional Evaluation Programme (report from 2018), gave recommendation to Montenegrin HEIs to engage their alumni and to develop their associations in order to obtain and optimise the benefits they can provide. Most of the shortcomings of the WB HE system come from the fact that university curricula are not aligned with the labour market. By engaging the alumni in teaching, mentoring and research, and establishing more and stronger connections between universities and the business sector these shortcomings could be overcome.

By carefully analysing the needs of the labour market, in accordance with the needs of both the private and public sectors, by adapting the enrolment policy, adapting the program to the optimal way of organizing students' practice with employers, i.e. by engaging employers and prominent representatives of the public and private sectors, alumni and representatives of the scientific diaspora, the Montenegrin HEIs will strengthen their profile as driving forces and incubators of ideas and innovations in Montenegrin society.

## II. Engagement of the University of Montenegro

University of Montenegro is the leading educational, scientific and artistic institution in the country, however it is necessary to continuously work on strengthening its research capacities through:

- Development and realization of high quality and innovative studies with internationally comparable and market-implementable learning outcomes;
- Providing practical and entrepreneurial trainings for students;
- Defining the scientific and research profile and priorities, creating interdisciplinary centres of excellence;
- Intensifying innovative activities, improving the excellence of research results;
- Improving the quality of scientific publications;
- Creating conditions for promising academic careers of young research staff, and;
- Establishing financial mechanisms that will ensure the continuity of funding of research groups and the sustainability of project results.

In order to achieve these priorities, the cooperation with the business sector, both at the national and international level is an absolute pre-requisite. As central educational, scientific and artistic institution in Montenegro, University of Montenegro maintains strong ties with economic, social and international environment, through productive cooperation with business and the public sector, which should eventually result in fostering employability of students and their better preparation for the labor market. However, additional efforts are needed in order to ensure more active involvement of the scientific diaspora and **alumni associations** in joint projects and activities in order to promote intellectual capital, culture of national identity and sustainable development of Montenegro. The alumni shall also contribute to professional and market-based career development of students, and also connect students with the labour market while studying, facilitating their connection with employers and their recruitment, while lowering the gap between the knowledge that students obtain at the universities, and skills that are required by labour market.

Following the given recommendations, University of Montenegro established a **Strategy of the University of Montenegro 2019-2024**, in which the values of alumni were acknowledged and highlighted. The Strategy encompassed all aspects of the University's functioning and its development potentials and priorities, with defined strategic directions of development and goals with action plans and key indicators for monitoring their implementation and evaluation.



According to that document, the engagement of alumni is an important tool for achieving some of the strategic goals of the University, such as to enhance international cooperation and cooperation with the economic sector, and establish the conditions for better employability of its graduated students. In that sense, the role of the project “*Western Balkan Entrepreneurial University Alliances – Keeping in touch for Lifelong Relations (AL4LIFE)*” in contributing to the issues raised in the UoM’s Strategy remains essential. The project activities are aligned with the **Strategy of the University of Montenegro 2019-2024** which calls for the establishment of alumni association at the level of the university and alumni clubs in all organizational units, involvement of alumni in drafting strategic documents, in revision of existing and development of new study programmes, in lifelong learning programmes, in projects preparation and implementation, in teaching process, etc.

Within the part *IV – University and the Environment*, of the UoM’s Strategy, it is clearly stated that the cooperation with alumni associations and scientific diaspora should be achieved, by implementing the measure: *A\_IV.2.1 - Active involvement of alumni associations and representatives of the scientific diaspora in supporting the development of UoM*, by 2024. The funds for this action will be provided by the University of Montenegro and alumni donations, monitored by the Rector and his team, Career Development Centre of the UoM, and organizational units i.e. their deans and directors.

In order to ensure proper implementation of this measure, the following indicators were set:

- Adopting Rulebook on cooperation with alumni associations at the level of the University and organizational units;
- Forming alumni associations at the University level and all organizational units;
- Inclusion of the alumni association and representatives of scientific diaspora during:
  - Creation of strategic documents;
  - Revision of existing and creation of new study programs, lifelong learning education programs, etc.;
  - Preparation and implementation of projects;
- At least 50% of organizational units include alumni and/or representatives of scientific diaspora in the teaching process;
- At least 50% of organizational units apply for projects jointly with institutions representing alumni and/or scientific diaspora.

Besides the Strategy of the University of Montenegro, another important document at the UoM is the **Internationalization Strategy, 2021-2026**. UoM strives to be a competitive and internationally recognized higher education institution in EHEA and ERA. Internationalization of study programmes, research and project activities with an international focus, mobility of researchers, professors and students represent the basis of UoM's international visibility. Montenegro has a very diverse and successful scientific and artistic diaspora whose potential has so far not been properly used, but scientists and artists in the diaspora represent an important networking asset and partner in internationalisation process.

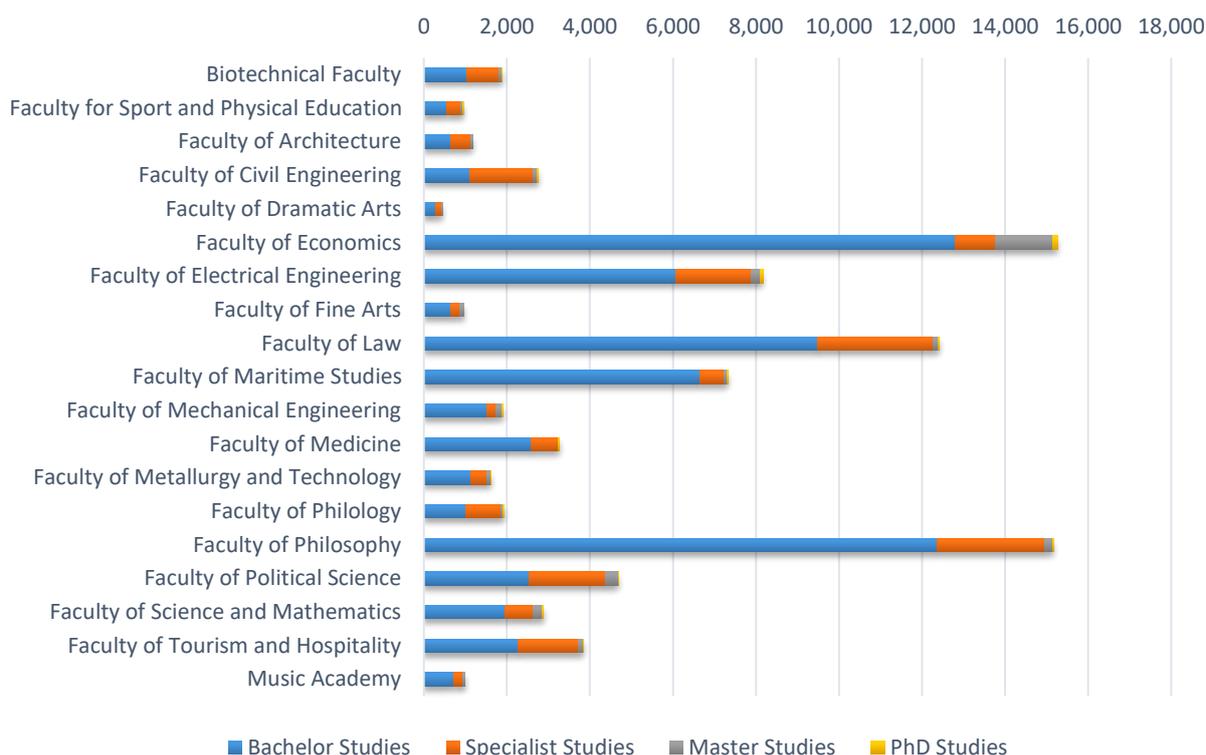
Within the part *4.2.2: Strategic activities in priority area 2: Internationalization of research* and the *Objective 2.1: Strengthening scientific and artistic cooperation with individuals and research institutions*, one of the actions for reaching that goal is *2.1.3: Intensification of cooperation with scientific and artistic diaspora*. To fulfil this action at least 10 featured scientists and artists from the diaspora need to have formalized and active status and engagement.



### III. Engagement of the Organizational Units in creating Alumni Clubs

University of Montenegro is the largest and the oldest HEI in the country. Since its foundation in 1974, approx. 90.000 students have graduated from all levels of studies, which is shown in the following graph.

**Graph 1 – Total number of graduates from all study levels at UoM, since 1974**



Source: Internal data

The highest number of graduated students comes from the Faculty of Economics (15.264) and Faculty of Philosophy (15.162), followed by the Faculty of Law (12.416), but UoM's former students who represent future alumni could be found in all spheres of Montenegrin society. More details are shown in the following table.

**Table 1 - Total number of graduates, breakdown by study level, since 1974**

No	Organizational Unit	Bachelor Studies	Specialist Studies	Master Studies	PhD Studies	Total
1	<b>Biotechnical Faculty</b>	1,032	768	75	1	1,876
2	<b>Faculty for Sport and Physical Education</b>	562	320	56	15	953
3	<b>Faculty of Architecture</b>	660	480	35	0	1,175
4	<b>Faculty of Civil Engineering</b>	1,113	1,516	107	26	2,762
5	<b>Faculty of Dramatic Arts</b>	286	140	17	0	443
6	<b>Faculty of Economics</b>	12,812	952	1,394	106	15,264
7	<b>Faculty of Electrical Engineering</b>	6,067	1,808	227	66	8,168
8	<b>Faculty of Fine Arts</b>	650	210	100	0	960
9	<b>Faculty of Law</b>	9,477	2,793	120	26	12,416



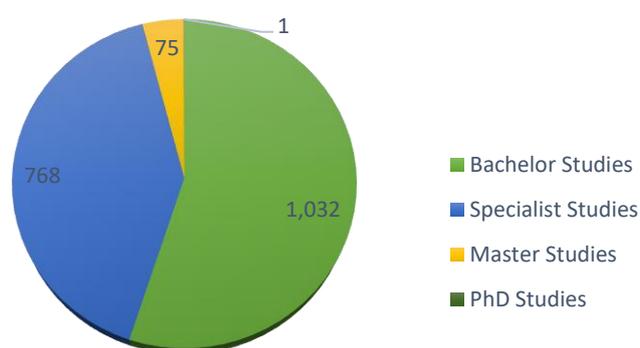
10	Faculty of Maritime Studies	6,663	568	77	12	7,320
11	Faculty of Mechanical Engineering	1,527	215	140	27	1,909
12	Faculty of Medicine	2,581	666	0	14	3,261
13	Faculty of Metallurgy and Technology	1,139	388	78	21	1,626
14	Faculty of Philology	1,005	843	60	18	1,926
15	Faculty of Philosophy	12,369	2,585	187	21	15,162
16	Faculty of Political Science	2,537	1,845	299	11	4,692
17	Faculty of Science and Mathematics	1,945	686	221	35	2,887
18	Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality	2,259	1,455	134	1	3,849
19	Music Academy	732	200	65	0	997
Σ	TOTAL	65,416	18,438	3,392	400	87,646

Source: Internal Data

By adopting the strategic documents UoM have created a ground for successful formation of the alumni association. Some of the units have already followed the given instructions, or they have taken the initiative and formed alumni clubs. Among 19 faculties, the alumni organizations were formed at 9 of them:

- Biotechnical Faculty:** the Alumni club was established at the end of 2021 in order to maintain close cooperation with all students who have completed any studies at Biotechnical Faculty; to develop and strengthen cooperation between the Faculty and institutions or organizations where the graduates work; to establish and encourage cooperation among members of the Alumni Club, especially between current students and their older colleagues who have already achieved professional success which could help them to connect with potential employers; to improve the educational and scientific activities of the Biotechnical Faculty and affirm the role of agriculture in society; to promote the reputation of the Biotechnical Faculty in the country and abroad; etc. The Alumni club gathers 168 members, at the moment, but the total number of graduated students from this unit is 1.876 and it is shown in the graph below.

**Graph 2** – Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Biotechnical Faculty, since its founding



Source: Internal Data

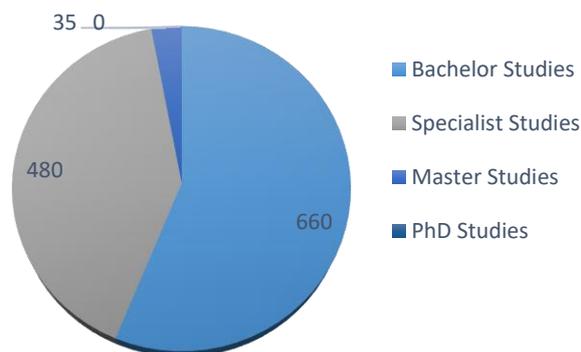
At the Biotechnical Faculty, 1.032 students graduated from bachelor, 768 from specialist, 75 from master and 1 from PhD level of studies;

- Faculty of Architecture:** The alumni community of the Faculty of Architecture has not been formally established, but in April 2022 they created a questionnaire / form for access through Google Forms and sent it to available addresses (only) to former students of the Faculty of



Architecture. The team formed a database of 40 students who filled out the form (among other, about possible further education and employment) and whose (contact) data they have in the database. They have not contacted current students on this issue. The total number of graduated students from the Faculty of Architecture is 1.175 and it is shown in the following graph.

**Graph 3** – Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Architecture, since its founding

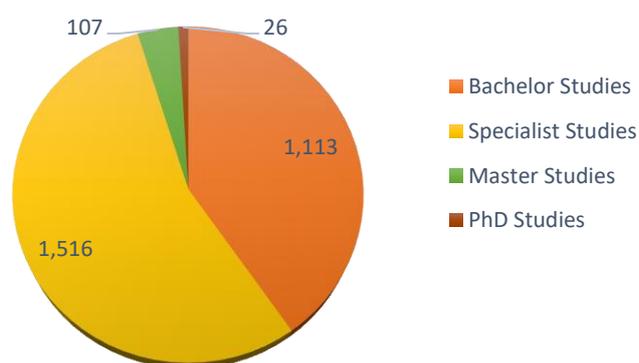


Source: Internal Data

At the Faculty of Architecture, 660 students graduated from bachelor, 480 from specialist, and 35 from master level of studies. Faculty of Architecture does not have graduated PhD students, yet.

- Faculty of Civil Engineering:** Alumni club was founded in 2020, and since then the database of 79 members has been created. The main goal of the alumni club is to connect former students, teachers, associates and friends of the Faculty of Civil Engineering, as well as to strengthen and build the reputation of the faculty. Besides that, the club aims to familiarize club members with each other's professional and scientific activities of, connect former students of all levels of study with the aim of mutual cooperation, and to develop cooperation between the companies, institutions and organizations where Alumni Club members are employed. An important task of the club is also affirmation, promotion and improvement of the role of construction in society, and connection with other educational and research institutions. There are 2.762 graduates, in total, from the Faculty of Civil Engineering since its founding.

**Graph 3** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Civil Engineering, since its founding



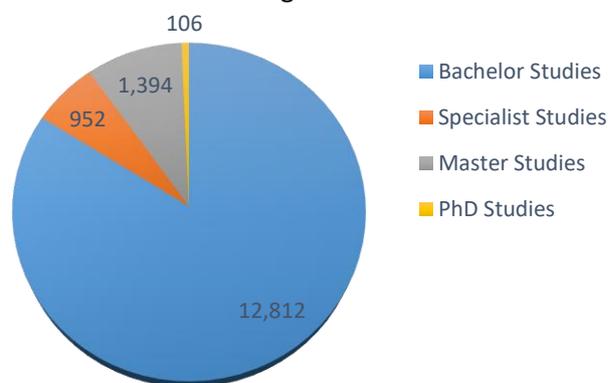
Source: Internal Data



As the graph shows, 1.113 students completed bachelor level of studies, 1.516 specialist (or integrated “old” system studies), 107 master and 26 PhD level.

- Faculty of Economics:** The alumni club was founded at the very end of 2022, as a project of strategic importance to improve and nurture relations with graduated economists and managers, encouraging cooperation with partners from the business community, public sector institutions and organizations where alumni build professional careers. The intention of the club is to gather members of a large community that consists of more than 15.000 former students who obtained their degrees from one of the study programs during the six decades of successful work of the Faculty of Economics. Apart from the active cooperation with alumni in the program of mandatory professional internships for students, one of the most important projects is the opening of the Club of students, alumni and professors of the Faculty of Economics, which will be located in the building of the Faculty of Economics and whose patrons are alumni. Adaptation of the space in the basement of the Faculty creates the possibility to start a kind of business hub in which it is possible to organize several activities, among which are: soft skills development workshops, creation of student project tasks, presentations of student professional practice programs and student mobility programs, panel discussions with professors and distinguished experts on economic and social topics, book promotion. In addition, the Club of Students, Alumni and Professors of the Faculty of Economics will be a place for the patrons of the Faculty of Economics to gather and present their work to students, through promoting the principles of social responsibility. The opening of this space is planned for the fall of 2023. Faculty of Economics is the oldest UoM’s organizational unit and since its founding 15.264 students obtained their degree, from the available study levels.

**Graph 4** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Economics, since its founding



Source: Internal Data

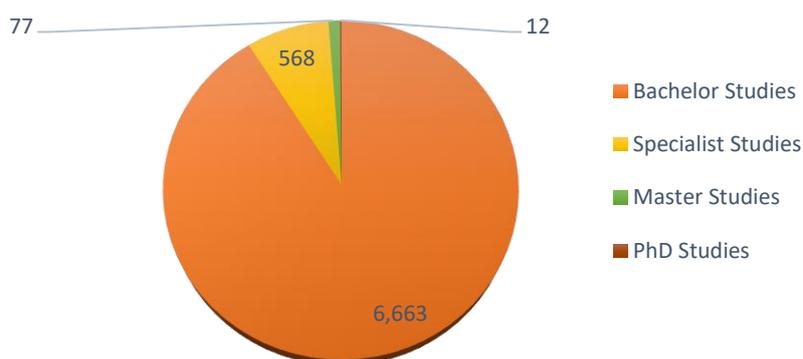
As shown on the graph, 12.812 students completed bachelor level of studies, 952 specialist, 1.394 master and 106 PhD level of studies.

- Faculty of Maritime Studies:** Alumni club was founded recently, in May 2023, with a desire to provide numerous activities both in the local community and beyond, in various fields of education, culture, and sport. The activities of the club are intended for the members both on the land, and especially for those who sail the world's seas with a diploma from the Maritime Faculty of Kotor. The objectives of the Alumni club are: preserving the tradition and image of the Maritime Faculty of Kotor, acknowledging the reputation and importance of the maritime profession, participation in important activities of interest to the wider social community,



connection with business entities where alumni are employed and with student organizations, while creating cooperation with related associations in the country and abroad, organizing and participating in educational events (seminars, conferences) and supporting teachers and students, their advancement and professional development. Alumni club gathers 89 members, at the moment, but the total number of graduated students from this unit is 7.320 and it is shown in the graph bellow.

**Graph 5** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Maritime Studies since its founding

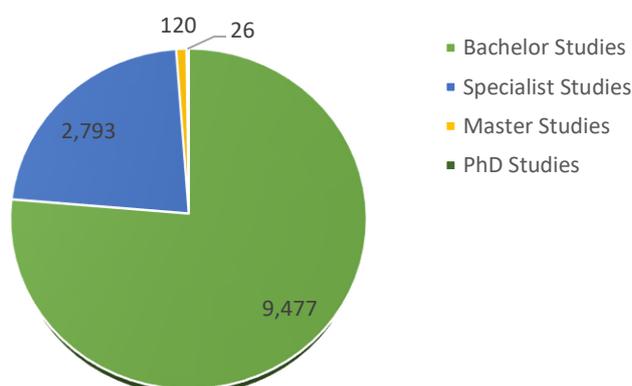


Source: Internal Data

The graph shows that 7.320 students in total graduated from the Faculty of Maritime Studies since its founding, out of which 6.663 bachelor, 568 specialist, 77 master and 12 PhD students.

- Faculty of Law:** By activating the Alumni Club in 2019, the Faculty wanted to remind their former students that the connection with the Faculty should not get lost after the graduation. The club has a database consisting of more than 5000 members, and the list is available on the [website](#). Goals of the Alumni Club at the Faculty of Law are: promotion and strengthening of the reputation of the Faculty of Law in Montenegro and the international community; building and strengthening ties and cooperation between former students and the Faculty of Law in order to strengthen the spirit of belonging to the Faculty; encouraging and establishing connections and cooperation between the Faculty of Law and educational and research institutions from related areas in Montenegro and abroad; Establishing and strengthening cooperation with institutions where former students of the Faculty of Law work and protect the interests of the profession according to the code and rules of the profession. Total number of graduated students from this unit is 12.416, and it is shown in the graph bellow.

**Graph 6** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Law, since its founding



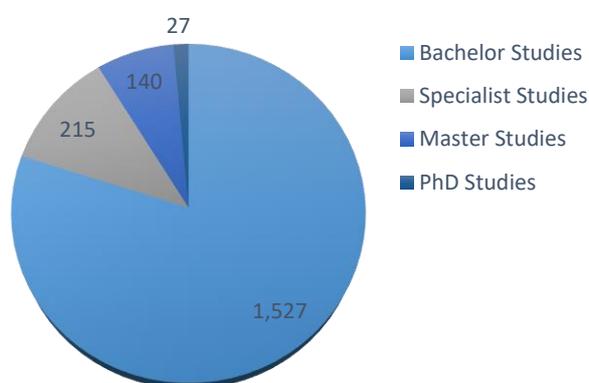
Source: Internal Data



At the Faculty of Law, 9.477 students graduated from bachelor, 2.793 from specialist, 120 from master and 26 from PhD level of studies.

- Faculty of Mechanical Engineering:** The Alumni Club of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering is a common space for all mechanical engineers who have the desire and will to improve cooperation with the Faculty on topics of mutual importance. Through it, the plan is to promote and strengthen the reputation of the mechanical engineers profession in the country, the surrounding area and beyond. The Alumni club was founded in 2021, and currently consists of [71 members](#). Since its founding, 1.909 students, from all study levels, completed the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering.

**Graph 7** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, since its founding



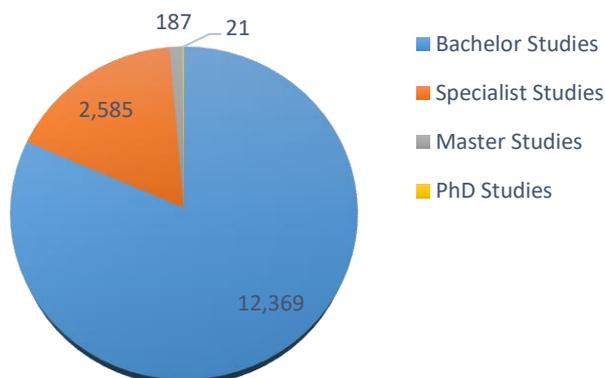
Source: Internal Data

1.527 students obtained their bachelor degree, 215 obtained a degree from specialist level of study, 140 from master and 27 from PhD level of studies.

- Faculty of Philosophy:** The club was founded in 2022, at the jubilee ceremony on the occasion of 75th year of the Faculty of Philosophy. Since the club is very "young", and they are only in the first round of meetings with their members, the club currently has about 50 members. The process of joining is continuous, and they firmly believe that by the one-year anniversary there will be a significantly larger number of club members. The main mission of the club is spreading awareness in Montenegrin society about the alumni idea and culture as a form of socially responsible behaviour; Spreading the reputation and promoting the name of the Faculty of Philosophy; Increasing the sense of belonging and loyalty of alumni to their Faculty of Philosophy; Improvement of living and working conditions of alumni; Strengthening the ties between the home faculty and generations of former and current students as well as their friends in the country and the world; Protecting the common interests of the Faculty of Philosophy - all for the benefit of the Faculty of Philosophy, its alumni and friends. Total number of graduated students from the Faculty of Philosophy is 15.162, and it is shown in the following graph.



**Graph 8** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Philosophy, since its founding

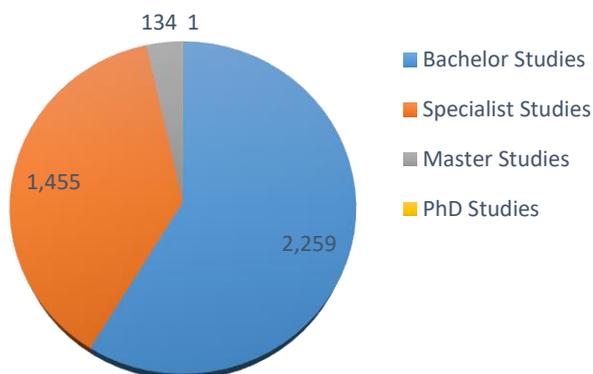


Source: Internal data

As the graph shows, 12.369 students completed bachelor level of studies, 2.585 specialist, 187 master and 21 PhD level.

- **Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management** created an application that gathers alumni through a digital database, at the beginning of 2023. After logging in, each member of the community has access to employment and basic information about other alumni. Also, with this application, they have connected companies and current students with alumni. The application provides an opportunity to organize practical trainings, as well as other types of cooperation. Theoretically, FTH has almost 4,000 alumni, but the base is still being replenished, so now there are slightly less than 1,000 members.

**Graph 9** - Total number of graduated students from all study levels at Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, since its founding



Source: Internal data

At the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, 2.259 students graduated from bachelor, 1.455 from specialist, 134 from master and 1 from PhD level of studies.

The following units do not have formally established alumni clubs, but they are using different ways to connect or promote them:

- **Faculty of Medicine** does not have its own alumni organization, but it is a host to the organization **MoMSIC** which is a volunteer non-governmental organization, based on the free accession and it represents an association of medical students aiming to achieve common goals. One of their main projects are student exchanges. MoMSIC has been in existence for



eight years and in their work so far they have facilitated over 300 exchanges for medical students, hosted over 350 students from all over the world, and organized numerous activities related to public health, reproductive health and the fight against AIDS, human rights and peace, as well as numerous humanitarian actions. Within this organization there is appointed president of alumni club;

- **Faculty of Electrical Engineering** doesn't have a formal alumni club, but they are promoting successful alumni career stories on their [website](#).

**Other units:** Faculty for Sport and Physical Education, Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Metallurgy and Technology, Faculty of Philology, Faculty of Political Science, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Music Academy do not have alumni organizations. Institutes (Institute of Marine Biology, Institute for Advanced Studies and Historical Institute) do not perform teaching so they do not have students at all.

Table 2 – Overview of existing alumni clubs at UoM

No	Organisational unit	Alumni club	Alumni database	Contact
1.	Biotechnical Faculty	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:btf@ucg.ac.me">btf@ucg.ac.me</a>
2.	Faculty for Sport and Physical Education	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:fakultetzasportnk@t-com.me">fakultetzasportnk@t-com.me</a>
3.	Faculty of Architecture	NO	YES	<a href="mailto:arhitektura@ucg.ac.me">arhitektura@ucg.ac.me</a>
4.	Faculty of Civil Engineering	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:gf@ucg.ac.me">gf@ucg.ac.me</a>
5.	Faculty of Dramatic Arts	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:fdu@ucg.ac.me">fdu@ucg.ac.me</a>
6.	Faculty of Economics	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:ekonomija@ucg.ac.me">ekonomija@ucg.ac.me</a>
7.	Faculty of Electrical Engineering	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:etf@ucg.ac.me">etf@ucg.ac.me</a>
8.	Faculty of Fine Arts	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:flu@ucg.ac.me">flu@ucg.ac.me</a>
9.	Faculty of Law	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:pf@ucg.ac.me">pf@ucg.ac.me</a>
10.	Faculty of Maritime Studies	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:pfkotor@ucg.ac.me">pfkotor@ucg.ac.me</a>
11.	Faculty of Mechanical Engineering	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:mf@ucg.ac.me">mf@ucg.ac.me</a>
12.	Faculty of Medicine	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:infomedf@ucg.ac.me">infomedf@ucg.ac.me</a>
13.	Faculty of Metallurgy and Technology	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:mtf@ucg.ac.me">mtf@ucg.ac.me</a>
14.	Faculty of Philology	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:filoloski@ucg.ac.me">filoloski@ucg.ac.me</a>
15.	Faculty of Philosophy	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:ff@ucg.ac.me">ff@ucg.ac.me</a>
16.	Faculty of Political Science	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:fpn@ucg.ac.me">fpn@ucg.ac.me</a>
17.	Faculty of Science and Mathematics	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:dekanat@rc.pmf.ac.me">dekanat@rc.pmf.ac.me</a>
18.	Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality	YES	YES	<a href="mailto:fth@ucg.ac.me">fth@ucg.ac.me</a>
19.	Music Academy	NO	NO	<a href="mailto:ma@ucg.ac.me">ma@ucg.ac.me</a>

Source: Internal Data

The common goal for existing alumni associations at the faculty level is to gather former students and to keep ties with them, but they are still not included in the core processes – teaching and research. The existing alumni clubs also do not operate at the same level, and, as it can be seen, the remaining organizational units are missing their alumni clubs. The project AL4LIFE intends to change that, and make possible for all units and the University of Montenegro as a whole, to build an active alumni association which will bring benefits for academic community, and for the society in general.



## IV. SWOT Analysis

In order to establish the alumni structure of the University of Montenegro in the best possible way, the following SWOT analysis should indicate the main strengths and upcoming opportunities, but also provide the awareness of the weaknesses and threats that can occur as well.

**Figure 1 – SWOT Analysis for establishing UoM’s Alumni Club**



Source: Internal Data



University of Montenegro is the oldest HEI in the country, with the largest number of graduated students which represents the biggest strength in establishing the alumni clubs. For decades, UoM was the only HEI in the country which provided an advantage of having high numbers of graduates with admirable and impressive careers, public functions, and with local and regional impact, but, at the same time, this also represents the responsibility to wisely select criteria and proper candidates who can join the UoM's alumni club.

Existing since 1974 as the only public HEI in the country, University of Montenegro has been constantly growing and expanding the educational possibilities for its students. Today, the University is comprised of 19 faculties and 3 scientific institutes, which sometimes represents a burden to internal coordination and slows down activities. In order to achieve the project results on time, special attention should be dedicated to choosing an adequate project team that will actively participate in project tasks and give contribution to project goals, and eventually lead to establishing of UoM's alumni clubs.

The fact that only nine faculties have already established their alumni clubs can be seen as weakness, but also as an opportunity. Having in mind that there are 19 faculties at the University of Montenegro, the units could be more proactive in creating the alumni clubs, but the existing ones could be used as a model to establish the new ones, at the units which are missing their alumni clubs. However, the harmonization needs to be done among the existing (and new) alumni clubs in order to reach the same level of organization and functioning.

The main and the greatest opportunity, so far, in creating the alumni structure of the UoM is the project "AL4LIFE". Providing external knowledge and experience from reliable EU partners, and gathering the partners from WB, this project should ensure all material and non-material resources in establishing alumni clubs at WB HEIs. The project will activate and push the process of creating and adopting the needed legislative (Alumni Strategy), but also development of proper IT solution (software) which will finally gather the necessary data about the UoM's graduates, i.e. alumni, and organize various events to make connections between alumni and the university. Another strength and opportunity is the level of motivation and commitment of the working team to achieve the main project goal.

With all the positive influences, there are budget limitations in developing the IT solution (software) and potential difficulties in data gathering due to the lack and non-existence of tracking system of graduates and their professional carriers, especially the ones who live and work abroad. It should be also taken with caution that maybe some of the well-positioned and reputable alumni lack willingness to join the alumni organization, and even though the covid-19 pandemic is over, some repercussions could still occur.

All of the above mentioned factors will, for sure, shape the process of creating and establishing the alumni clubs at the UoM, but hopefully, the positive influences will prevail, especially the ones coming from the "AL4LIFE" project and previous history and reputation that UoM has built through decades of educational, scientific, and artistic service to the society.



## V. Conclusion

Aware of the responsibility that University of Montenegro, being the central educational, scientific and artistic institution in the country, holds for the sustainable development of the society, the University continuously invests significant efforts to remain a bridge that connects the tradition of Montenegrin science and arts with the new era, while preserving the Montenegrin identity, tradition, culture, heritage, history, and multiculturalism.

Following the global trends in the field of higher education, technology and methodology of the teaching process, University of Montenegro will keep adding novelties and improving the quality of the teaching process through the development of modern study programs with market applicable and internationally comparable learning outcomes. Interdisciplinary study programs, internationalization as well as the popularization of studies from priority areas, are key levers of successful positioning of University of Montenegro in the EHEA and ERA.

AL4LIFE project aims to support WB HEIs in keeping the pace with those global trends by strengthening connections between institutions and their former students, which will enhance employability of the students, thus meeting the market needs and boosting innovation capacities of national economies. The main tool for achieving this objective is greater inclusion of practical teaching/education and development of competences that will strengthen their preparedness for the labour market. This strategic objective and need require the establishment and strengthening of the connections between HEIs and the business sector in WB economies, by having the alumni permanently and actively involved in the functioning of their HEIs. Apart from improvement and modernization of teaching process, the alumni involvement in WB HEIs education and operational environment needs to be based on the formal, organised and comprehensive system, which shall ultimately contribute to the development of university-business cooperation, greater employability of students and commercialization of WB HEIs' research potential.

The engagement of alumni at the University of Montenegro is currently not at the optimal stage. Only 9 out of 19 organizational units formed the alumni clubs, and even within this group there are significant differences in the ways in which they operate. Furthermore, the existing alumni clubs have only recently been formed, so they still do not gather large number of members, and clear criteria on who can join an alumni club are often missing.

Within the project duration, tasks and activities shall be performed in order to build strong and active alumni association at the university level that will help the UoM reach the goals presented in its Strategy of the University of Montenegro and the Internationalization Strategy. Including alumni in teaching and research processes, while ensuring their active participation in career development tools that should help the graduating students to find jobs, will eventually build a strong network that will help UoM reinforce its community and its local and international position in the field of higher education.

Aware of all the difficulties, there are still strong incentives given by "AL4LIFE" project, internal potentials and a large number of graduates – many of them with impressive careers, which all assures that the process of establishing alumni structure at the UoM will be successfully accomplished.



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