Appendix A.

from 15 May 2025

Ukrainian Catholic University

Interview with Dmytro Sherengovsky, Vice-Rector for Outreach and Social Engagement

(Translated from Ukrainian)

Form of data collection: Audio recording

Strategic impact and institutional priorities

Q: How has Russia's full-scale invasion affected your university's international priorities and strategies?

A: Obviously, the second phase of Russia's war against Ukraine since 2022 has changed everything. As for UCU, I would say that we were immediately faced with a three-level task, which we began to implement. The first task was security. It was related to the fact that part of our students — mostly, but also some staff — were either abroad or forced to relocate with their families, especially those from the east, south, or north. We needed to know the story of every student.

We didn't want to lose our students, and the students didn't want to lose their connection to the university. So, the question arose: how can we ensure this? International partners became a key element that helped us. Many of our partners reached out with expressions of solidarity, others we asked to show solidarity, which resulted in concrete actions: universities provided financial aid or scholarships to students from affected regions so that they could participate in mobility programs. This helped cover their stay and studies abroad, and we, in turn, could transfer their earned credits. We chose a strategy of individual approach — identifying every student (over 100 of them), and also our faculty. We appealed to partner universities to host them for studies or internships. If there was no university in a given region, we searched for other opportunities with the students — even with institutions we hadn't previously contacted but who

showed solidarity. As a result, we managed to create conditions for each person: students maintained access to the educational process, received legal residence abroad, continued their studies, and had their academic results recognized. Faculty could continue their research and received financial and resource support. Our partnerships and the international academic community became the first sources of assistance for those in need.

Another important area was informing the world, academic communities, and countries about what was happening. Our partnerships became a megaphone. We understood how important it was to spread information about Ukraine using the platforms of our partner universities. They often organized conferences, round tables, or simply provided platforms for us to share what was happening, broadcasting truthful narratives, not Russian disinformation. That's when we realized that universities are powerful players in this area, and that through our academic contacts, we can influence the situation, even at the grassroots level.

This became the basis for our strategic vision — in the UCU Development Strategy until 2030, one of the priorities is spreading Ukrainian narratives abroad.

We pay special attention to countries and regions where Ukraine's voice is still not heard enough — particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Now, this is symbolically embedded in our strategy, which includes a whole set of concrete steps to promote Ukraine's image. Once again, international partners are not just a support resource but a source of solidarity and an important medium for spreading information. This concerns not only informational support but also working with us in areas like Ukrainian studies, educational programs, Ukrainerelated research, and the development of educational cases focused on the Ukrainian context.

The third level, I would say, is strategic — an awareness of the importance of networks, partnerships, consortia, and alliances. We obviously understood this before and had experience in networking. But after the full-scale invasion, we suddenly found ourselves in the category of countries at war, with armed conflicts or major ecological crises. On one hand, it's a great tragedy. On the other, it opened our eyes to how we are coping in this situation. And we saw that we're coping quite well. Our university management, our rules, our behavior, our public service suddenly became very important and very interesting to the world. Many universities, fortunately, do not have this experience — but also don't know how to deal with it. We realized we can not only act but also share UCU's practices with the world — offering solutions and experiences in higher education management and internationalization that have become valuable.

Others can learn from us. This is best realized through networks focused on societal learning, through global Catholic university collaboration, especially in crisis contexts, or through European university alliances.

We discovered that these structures are not only useful for us, but that our experiences, contexts, ideas, and research are valuable for the education system itself, for knowledge about education, for areas such as educational management and sociology of education. And on this strategic level, we are also gaining momentum.

Q: Has the role of internationalization at your university fundamentally changed since the beginning of the war?

A: Obviously, there had already been a setback with COVID. It was due to the fact that after COVID, everyone was tired of online learning — it worked well for some, not so well for others. We, like many Ukrainian universities, were forced to use those online experiences because part of our student body had left the country. UCU was able to return to campus more quickly. In fact, we were never away from campus for long — thanks to our use of community-oriented learning models (Service Learning), we realized we could do many important things right here, on the ground. But our international partners had already switched to online even before the war, and we began analyzing these formats as a way to stay connected. That's when the COIL format and virtual learning became relevant again. On the one hand, we had a need; on the other, we understood that we were working quite effectively in this area, and there were many good outcomes, especially when combining Collaborative Online International Learning with different regions where Ukraine was present, or when we combined this with community-based learning — like joint products with communities in Ukraine or, for instance, in Indonesia. We saw how much this broadened perspectives and changed the thinking of students, teachers, and communities. We realized that these virtual formats must have a place, and we definitely want to build our quality in this area. So, in this context, this was a real shift — we realized we want to be one of the best in the country in COIL methodology and virtual learning, and we're very ready to keep working on it.

Alternative pathways and adaptation

Q: What alternative forms of international activity (virtual mobility, online collaboration, twinning projects, international research) have been implemented at your university? How effective have they been?

A: This continues what I mentioned earlier. Yes, we already had experience with virtual mobility, online collaboration, and remote research before the full-scale war began, but obviously these practices expanded significantly — and I'll explain why.

Another important aspect is that these online formats enabled many scholars and faculty members to participate in programs such as Scholars at Risk and other initiatives that fund faculty to remain in their home university without needing to leave the country. This was especially important in the early years of the war, particularly for men, whose ability to leave was limited. So, faculty could stay in Ukraine but receive financial support from Western partners and continue doing academic work on-site. Given the economic downturn in the education sector caused by the war, this format became highly effective and opened new opportunities for researchers, including ours. Moreover, it brought increased attention from the international academic community to Ukraine. We already have many examples of online collaboration between faculty and researchers — I can say it's becoming a new standard. It's becoming a standard part of the research process where physical meetings are now just one component alongside online collaboration. Previously, online was either excluded or considered auxiliary — suddenly it became fully equal.

Twinning programs were also mentioned — these are specific forms of cooperation where universities committed to supporting Ukrainian institutions, including ours. We built a global solidarity network involving many different partners. Parallel to this, initiatives were launched by Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with international agencies. For example, Scorma Consultancy Group in the UK initiated a British twinning program, where Ukrainian and British universities partnered to submit joint applications and received funding to implement joint products — such as master's programs, joint research, or offering British university courses to Ukrainian students. We took advantage of this opportunity, and we are very happy to have gained a partner like the University of Nottingham. We had some interaction with them before, but more informally. Now we have a strategic relationship. We have a joint master's program in the humanities — history in particular. At UCU it's the "Future of

Heritage" program in our Faculty of Humanities. We are now preparing to recruit students jointly, and we aim to transform this program to be accessible to both Ukrainian students (who can earn both UK and Ukrainian degrees) and international students. There are also several research initiatives — these are direct results of twinning, which has proven very effective.

I'd also like to mention our partnership with the University of Notre Dame, which allocated its own funds to support our students and faculty and fund research programs — without applying for external aid programs. Notre Dame has invested in the launch of a Ukrainian hub, which we are implementing jointly with Notre Dame and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies on a partnership basis. This will be a center for Ukrainian studies at Notre Dame — one of the key centers for Ukrainian studies in the United States. Such twinning and bilateral partnerships, along with international projects, have become strategic focuses for UCU. We have developed a strategy to grow such partnership formats — specifically to have at least one strategic partner in every region of the world. This will strengthen our global presence and help represent Ukraine at the academic level effectively.

As for effectiveness — yes, these mechanisms were very effective at the time. Of course, some forms of cooperation have evolved over time. We now understand that some online courses or access to Western educational platforms — so-called open or virtual universities — have lost some of their relevance. People want to be part of a community again, to be on campus. Yet, online courses have become an integrated part of educational programs and are sometimes delivered in hybrid form. In my opinion, this transformation has been effective. The formats that have remained have shown their stability and results over time and have become more structured. If in the first stage, it was an emotional reaction and desire to help, now both we and our partners see the academic value in it. We now work with these formats not just as tools for overcoming hardships — like power outages — but as full-fledged pedagogical models. They are becoming research formats, educational tools, and even one of the university's third mission vectors — public engagement. So we see that these formats are becoming a sustainable part of the modern educational and research environment.

Resilience and psychological support

Q: How has internationalization contributed to the psychological resilience of students and staff (through support networks, symbolic or material solidarity, mental health)?

A: That's a very interesting question. Unfortunately, we did not systematically measure this to produce concrete results, but from the feedback we received, for many, it was like medicine. Especially in situations involving not just students themselves, but also their families — parents who had to flee. The question arose: what do we do next? And then, when our partners responded — "let's have you study with us for a semester" — it brought a sense of stability. We ourselves reached out with such requests to partner universities. These offers already created islands of stability, thanks to which students could continue studying and, over time, assess the situation more calmly and gain access to new resources. And I am very proud that, unlike many other universities, the overwhelming majority of our students returned and completed their studies at UCU. The same applies to faculty. We have only a few individuals who decided to stay in Europe, Canada, or the USA for now, but they remain connected to our community, and we maintain active communication with them. So, I believe both material and symbolic solidarity played a decisive role. Otherwise, we wouldn't have seen this return of people, or heard from them that they feel confident again. To some extent, these really were islands of stability for those who needed them.

There was also a very symbolic element when we received words of gratitude from our partners. We published them, shared them, and forwarded them. Especially during the first months, when it was crucial for Ukrainians to know that they were heard — that the world had not abandoned them. And universities showed this. It gave hope. Or, when we jointly created networks to counter Russian disinformation and the influence of pro-Russian scholarly associations, institutions, or researchers affiliated with the Kremlin — that also gave a sense of justice. Because we realized that the world was recognizing the lies. We saw that the world was identifying the untruth and that those who had been the mouthpieces of Kremlin narratives were going silent — people no longer wanted to listen to them. And we believe this is just. So I think that, in this context, mental resilience was indeed supported. And we can speak about it.

Q: Can you share an example of flexibility or resilience shown by your team or students in supporting international activity during the war?

A: In fact, we have many examples that confirm this. For instance, our students took part in international competitions — especially in law — like moot courts, where, despite the war,

they trained, traveled, and won. The same goes for simulations of international organizations, particularly UN models, where our students represented Ukraine at a high level, influencing other participants and spreading awareness about Ukraine beyond formal academic settings. Another direction was research initiatives, where our students participated in applied science and computer vision conferences, presenting their developments and solutions, which were highly praised by the scientific community and continued to circulate as high-quality research products. It's also worth mentioning the civic and volunteer activity of our students — even those who went abroad for international studies. They joined initiatives to help Ukrainians abroad, worked with civic organizations, and demonstrated active international solidarity outside the formal university program. All of this shows resilience. Despite trauma and the challenges of war, we realized that educational and cultural diplomacy are critically important, and that student voices and stories — as well as researchers' stories — must be heard and actively echoed in the international space.

International solidarity and partnerships

Q: What support has your university received from international partners or global educational networks during the war (resources, advocacy, technical assistance)?

A: I've already mentioned the resources, advocacy, and technical assistance. But it's worth emphasizing that the solidarity network we built is truly a demonstrative example of effective support. For example, European university alliances opened the door for Ukrainian universities to participate, even if formally we could not yet be full members. Through various mechanisms, we were integrated into partner projects, and this significantly influenced our strategic vision. Today, we have a clear strategy whereby every UCU faculty is expected to join a corresponding European alliance in its field. This grants access to resources, funding, joint research projects, academic mobility, and idea exchange. Moreover, global education networks supported us not only through alliances but also through communities. For instance, the European Association for International Education (EAIE), as well as regional networks — American, Canadian, Catholic — invited us to their events, provided platforms for highlighting the Ukrainian experience, and organized sessions where we could speak and explain what is happening in Ukraine. And this was a powerful expression of advocacy and solidarity — not to mention the funds and projects I've already referred to.

Q: How has participation in consortia (e.g., the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities) contributed to international cooperation and collective response to the challenges of war?

A: I've spoken about international alliances, as well as European, global, and Catholic consortia. But in response to community needs, we, together with other Ukrainian universities, created the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities, combining efforts to help communities and universities implement their third mission. Together, we also engaged with our international partners and strengthened each other. For instance, in the field of international activity, a school for instructors on COIL methodology development and use has been successfully running for the second year now. A large community of instructors from various universities who implement COIL is forming. We're learning together and inviting faculty and experts from around the world — those who create and develop these formats. Of course, it's possible to implement such initiatives independently, but when we join forces with other partners and show: your expertise helps not just one university, but a coalition — this becomes a different conversation, a different scale of impact. Donors and partners are far more willing to support such forms of collaboration. On the other hand, we also understand that many challenges cannot be overcome alone — especially for UCU, which is a small university with a large impact. And this impact is realized through partnerships. The Alliance of Ukrainian Universities is a very good platform that allows us to learn from one another and pool resources for greater outcomes.

Q: How have international partnerships supported physical or infrastructural resilience (humanitarian aid, equipment, campus support)?

A: Yes, I've partly mentioned this: there was both humanitarian aid and support for faculty and students. There were many different programs and projects, and the assistance was quite structured. We also had cases at UCU where partners opened up access to resources — for example, library databases, software, and online courses. We still use these resources today, and we're very grateful for that. Fortunately, UCU did not experience major destruction, but some of our partners in eastern and southern Ukraine, whose universities were damaged by the war, received significant equipment aid — especially after the destruction of laboratories and research centers. Many European partners provided equipment and materials for recovery. In our case, the main support concerned access to educational platforms, participation in research programs, guest lectures, and joint applications for donor and grant programs. There was also engagement

of foreign lecturers in the teaching process, which became an important element of support and international solidarity.

Educational and cultural diplomacy

Q: How has your university implemented cultural and educational diplomacy strategies through internationalization during the war (promotion of Ukrainian culture, international events, media participation)?

A: I mentioned this as well, right? We included in UCU's strategy a global component where we actively want to use educational, cultural, scientific, and also ecclesial diplomacy. A vivid example is the inauguration of the Gabriel Institute in the United States, when our president, Bishop Borys, founded this institute and program, which now operates with individuals engaged in ecclesial diplomacy. We understood this is our responsibility. This way we can truly help Ukraine — the state — where classical diplomacy has other tasks and is often limited. Sometimes, the official position of countries does not support bottom-up transformation — they may be ambivalent or neutral. But at the level of university communities, at the level of influencing public opinion through media channels, we can speak beyond official positions and shift narratives and public perception.

Essentially, our "UCU Global" strategy is a strategy of cultural, educational, and scientific diplomacy. Moreover, we've reinforced this by opening a foundation in

Poland, based in Wrocław. This is UCU's international hub, where our partners — who cannot travel to Lviv due to security — can come with their students, and we also travel there. This opens opportunities for what are called faculty-led tours, when professors who co-teach courses or collaborate on research can meet students there. We use both the foundation and the city of Wrocław for this. We've also strengthened our American direction — we now have an academic representative in the U.S. working on academic and research projects and cooperation with specific universities. Separately, we have a foundation in the

U.S. that focuses on fundraising. We've launched the BRIDGE program for donations and revival support, which we're implementing with American universities. We've also engaged five Catholic universities from five Latin American countries, with whom we are developing COIL courses and organizing a conference for international department heads — they will come together to explore better ways of cooperation with Ukrainian universities. To be frank, we're

already in talks with many embassies abroad. Seeing our activity, they begin to support us and also initiate requests: can we provide them with expertise or recommend specialists or faculty for these initiatives? This is all growing very actively. Embassies are also reaching out to us when faced with tasks that require intellectual resources, and we see that the university can provide it. So I'd say that this is all still expanding, but we already have a very strong foundation to build on.

We want to build our cultural, educational, and scientific diplomacy as diplomacy for education and science — using all these opportunities to strengthen the educational and research components through existing resources, contacts, and partnerships. At the same time, we also view this as education and science for diplomacy — to strengthen Ukraine's positioning. And the third component is diplomacy in education and science — engaging with the international environment as a standard of academic and research activity. We've already clearly decided not to launch new programs that lack an international component. Even if a program is focused on Ukraine, it must include dual degrees, international internships, modules, etc. Likewise, with research — we want it to be conducted within international scientific networks. And our public projects implemented in Ukraine — we are ready to share that experience and those solutions with international partners to address similar challenges worldwide.

Post-war recovery planning

Q: Does your university plan for post-war recovery in the context of internationalization? What strategies are being developed to restore international partnerships and projects?

A: The main focus here is the active involvement of international students and faculty — that is, international talent — who, after the war, would come to Ukraine and use their expertise in the rebuilding process. This is the biggest question. Unfortunately, many universities currently don't allow their students to come here, but we see that there are enormous needs that Ukraine alone cannot solve — especially when we talk about the "Build Back Better" principle. We need the world's best talents to come here and work on trauma, the economy, inclusion, physical reconstruction, and new inclusive solutions.

So, our strategy is to already start — through online cooperation and through our gateway hubs, for example in Wrocław — creating ongoing collaboration that will eventually materialize into joint projects and visits to Ukraine. At every international platform I attend, I always

emphasize to our partners: if today you are speaking about solidarity and support for Ukraine, then real support means including Ukrainian cases in education and research, working with us and other Ukrainian universities so that students, graduates, and talents come to Ukraine and participate in its reconstruction — not just rebuilding, but creating something far better.

Our strategy in this direction includes developing online interaction, building a shared research portfolio, supporting researchers, creating a learning portfolio, using the Wrocław gateway hub, and preparing projects that will be implemented on-site after the war ends and victory is achieved.

In the meantime, we act as providers — for example, tasks from businesses, NGOs, or communities are executed through us but aimed at the future. A vivid example is Business on the Frontlines — a project by the University of Notre Dame, where students come to crisis regions and work on solving real business problems.

Lessons and recommendations

Q: What key lessons has your university learned about supporting internationalization in times of crisis? What recommendations would you give to other educational institutions affected by war or crisis?

A: Regarding internationalization, there are several lessons. First — partnerships matter greatly. Well-developed partnerships are not just about resources, they're about a culture of cooperation and support. People offer help even when you don't ask. That's important. Among universities in the international context, we see how crucial consortia or alliance-based cooperation is — it creates a community of interaction. The first recommendation is to have such friends with whom you can build this.

The second idea, the second lesson — we absolutely need different forms of engagement. We can't limit this to student or faculty exchanges or joint research projects. We've seen that our methods during the war — the approaches and services we've built for ourselves, for the community, for society — are incredibly important learning points for others. For those who, fortunately, don't have such experiences. For them, we are a source of expertise. So this experience must be developed, documented, turned into case studies, researched, and shared. It's hard to do this in the middle of a crisis when the primary problems need to be solved — but it's

necessary. And partners can help — for example, by documenting experiences when we don't have the time.

The third point — many initiatives come from the bottom up. This is important. Strategy must consider that in a crisis, many things can emerge from the grassroots. You have to listen to your faculty, staff, student communities. If a university interacts properly beforehand, much can be done at the foundational level. The administration's job is to support, not to invent things from the top.

Many initiatives can be implemented between different categories. That's one of the major lessons — decentralization as a quality reform. And it works in international activities too.

Forms of internationalization

Q: How has the war affected the physical mobility of students and staff?

A: Speaking of internationalization formats, the war has clearly affected physical mobility for students and faculty. Border closures for men became a serious challenge we've constantly tried to overcome. Later, the Ministry began facilitating the ability of male students and scholars to travel for short-term exchange programs. But even here, there was a certain tension. Why? Because many programs and policies officially opened for public universities, while private universities were excluded from the regulatory framework. This created a situation where every time our UCU students or staff go abroad for research or programs, we have to request special permission. Meanwhile, students from state universities don't have to — their opportunities are secured by the state, even though they also need some paperwork. It's a very flawed distinction. This story is about a lot of inconvenience, but also about broader liberal principles — how the system should really work. If we create regulatory mechanisms, they should be the same for everyone, without exceptions. For example, we still face problems with participation in international olympiads and competitions — sometimes male students simply can't leave because the Ministry or border officials deny them.

We understand that it's a crisis situation, but it's also about equality of conditions. Meanwhile, many programs opened up for girls. There were so many of them that even those who hesitated began to participate and discovered that it's not hard at all. So that's another important aspect we've seen.

Q: What types of virtual mobility were implemented (COIL, virtual Erasmus programs)? How effective were they compared to physical mobility?

A: Yes. COILs and virtual Erasmus programs — we have participated in and continue to participate in them. I've already said that the COIL methodology is and will be one of the core teaching and research methods at UCU. We believe in this project and are actively developing it. As for effectiveness — we must assess it this way: in a situation where physical mobility is difficult, it's a real opportunity. Also, when we gain access to instructors who cannot physically come to Ukraine, it's better than nothing. As for the effectiveness of the courses themselves — it varies. COIL programs are quite complex, and not everything works out the first time, but it's an incredible experience when you can co-teach courses with countries or regions where Ukraine is almost unrepresented and traditionally difficult to reach. Individual students may get there, but full groups — no. I mean our experience of cooperation with Indonesian universities. Now we have access to American universities where our students rarely go. And COIL makes that possible. In the context of Erasmus and virtual programs — this is a very good supplementary component. When courses have an online part and then an in-person session — it significantly saves resources and helps build new pedagogy.

Q: How have academic programs been adapted to preserve or strengthen the international component (new English-taught programs, joint/double degrees)?

A: Yes, we took a broader approach to dual degrees. We can't say we hadn't worked on it before, but now it has become a more deliberate and structured effort. A strong motivation was the need to spread knowledge and information about

Ukraine more widely in the world. So now we've revised the list of our international partners and programs — including at the ministry level — to develop double or joint degrees.

Q: Has your university implemented elements of "Internationalization at Home" during the full-scale invasion? How exactly?

A: Yes, this is part of the entire effort. In fact, the concept of internationalization at home was embedded in our previous strategy, which we have since updated.

This element remains, although there is less emphasis on it now, except that we've developed the "UCU Global" brand. There's a website where everything related to our cultural, educational, and scientific diplomacy is now unified under that identity. At the same time, we are working toward bilingualism — meaning that both Ukrainian and English should be used more often in university documentation and communication channels (particularly on websites).

Q: Have international research projects been preserved or expanded? Has the war affected their topic or format?

A: Yes, as I mentioned, they've expanded — so I won't repeat myself. The war has indeed influenced their topics, because many of our projects now relate to the war — rethinking war, social transformation, working with veterans, trauma treatment, rehabilitation, and psychological resilience. Clearly, all of this revolves around the war theme and our lived experience. Traditional research topics haven't disappeared — many researchers continue working on them — but the situation demands adaptation, and many have shifted. For example, migration researchers and sociologists who previously studied general migration or urban processes are now working on refugees and internally displaced persons. Or those studying inclusion — now their focus is on veterans who have experienced the horrors of war and face physical or psychological challenges related to disability.

Q: Which form of internationalization proved to be the most resilient at your university during the war? Which was the least resilient? Please rank the forms of internationalization in your institution from most resilient (5) to most vulnerable (1) and explain your choice.

A: I'd say educational and cultural diplomacy is developing. Institutional partnerships became more resilient. International scientific research — we are heavily investing in it right now. Internationalization at home — we did solid work in earlier stages. Now we're adjusting it to the form of international cooperation we need. Curriculum internationalization also strengthened, especially for master's programs — that's our focus. Virtual mobility clearly increased, especially with COIL — not just lectures from foreign instructors, as before (which still continue), but we've significantly emphasized COIL and formats like Global Talks, where students from different countries have shared platforms for discussion. And physical mobility — it has increased in quantity. There have not been so many offers in a long time, especially in the early stages of the war — it was part of the international solidarity network we built. Now it's stabilizing again. The only major limitation remains for male students — only recently have things slightly opened up, and still mostly for competitions, shortterm or cultural trips — those are still very limited.

Additional Questions

Q: Does the Ukrainian Catholic University have a strategy for increasing the number of international students coming for study or internships? How realistic is it to expect growth in

international student numbers in Ukraine during full-scale war, given the trend of annual decline? What tools or approaches could help reverse this trend?

A: Yes, we do have such a strategy, but it specifically concerns the programs we are internationalizing. That is, master's programs where we have a clear plan. For example, the "Future of Heritage" program, which will become a joint program with the University of Nottingham — we will carry out joint recruitment. We also have plans with the School of Public Management, with programs in Data Science, Law, Psychology, and others. So this will be a very natural component. We are not aiming for a simple increase in the number of international students, as is the case at some other universities. Instead, we are building educational products that already include and should be of interest to international students. Another aspect is that we plan to involve more students in short-term and

professional programs, especially through summer schools. But we don't have a goal of saturating the campus with foreign students. We approach this from the perspective of attracting talent and professional interaction. This is about complementing the experience of our students, expanding awareness about Ukraine, and attracting those professionals who can help on the ground. COIL programs, community-based engagement, internships, joint projects, faculty-led tours — this is what really works. And we believe there is great demand for it. We even say that if you want to build a good career in a particular field, postwar Ukraine is the best country to do it. The number of needs is enormous, and you can gain experience and a strong professional reputation very quickly — if you are talented.

Q: In your view, how has the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities, by pooling resources and expertise, strengthened the potential of internationalization in Ukrainian higher education?

A: As I mentioned regarding COIL — we also plan to build a joint COIL center. I would add here the UN Model project, which we are actively working on. We are one of the few representing Ukraine on that platform, participating in national, major global competitions, as well as regional conferences. We're already discussing the idea of making Ukraine a regional hub where the whole world would gather. After our victory and the restoration of safety, this will be actively pursued. We already have partners in regional conferences and in the advisory boards of the UN Model itself. To implement this well, we need to train others.

UN Model isn't something new — many similar formats exist — but NMAN is the biggest such model. As part of the Alliance, we also plan joint competitions to involve as many

Ukrainian universities as possible. This would allow Ukraine to become a world-class regional platform. And here, resource pooling will be extremely important. Another aspect is joint projects. We're also lobbying and advocating for Ukrainian universities to become full participants in European alliances. We show our activity and demonstrate that we genuinely want to take this approach. For many, this is about capacity-building.

In general, for UCU — with "UCU Global" as a strategic goal — we are complementing the efforts of many Ukrainian embassies and analytical centers. Where formal Ukrainian diplomacy, for various reasons, does not succeed or lacks influence, universities can step in as powerful actors.