

# NEWSLETTER

THE CLASS OF  
**2020**

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**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation (U.S.-CAEF) Enterprise Student Fellowship Program is an undergraduate business education scholarship program for academically gifted students sponsored by the U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation and the U.S. Department of State, and administered by American Councils for International Education. The Foundation, in partnership with the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek (AUCA) & the KIMEP University in Almaty, provides educational opportunities in business and technologies for students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan to cultivate a principled entrepreneurial environment in Central Asia that fosters the growth of free enterprise and open markets.



**THE FOUNDATION IS GRATEFUL FOR SUPPORT FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, ITS CITIZENS & THE CENTRAL ASIAN-AMERICAN ENTERPRISE FUND, WHICH HAVE MADE ITS OPERATION POSSIBLE.**

# 10<sup>th</sup> CELEBRATING GRADUATION 2020

Throughout their four years of study, the graduating Fellows have shown themselves to be true leaders and role models at their respective universities. These are just a few of the many remarkable accomplishments of the graduating seniors:

## CELEBRATING

**10<sup>th</sup>**  
COHORT

**28**  
FELLOWS

**13**  
KIMEP  
UNIVERSITY  
IN ALMATY,  
KAZAKHSTAN

**15**  
AUC  
IN BISHKEK,  
THE KYRGYZ  
REPUBLIC



**70%**  
recognized  
on President's  
and Dean's Lists



**27%**  
promoted active  
learning on campus  
working as peer tutors



**55%**  
gained professional work  
experience with at least  
three companies



**65%**

took part in highly competitive study abroad programs in Austria, Hong Kong, France, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Sweden, and the USA

THE FELLOWS  
HAIL FROM ALL  
5 COUNTRIES OF  
CENTRAL ASIA:



12 Kyrgyz Republic  
5 Kazakhstan  
9 Tajikistan  
1 Turkmenistan  
1 Uzbekistan

**48%**

led university organizations and clubs, and initiated and spearheaded impactful projects, benefiting orphans, children with disabilities, youth, and women.



**39%**

fared well in local and international business competitions, garnering numerous prizes.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2020 & BEST WISHES!

## LEARNING TO LEAD THROUGH NEW EXPERIENCES

U.S.-CAEF Fellows actively seek out professional development opportunities for their future careers and strive to develop their talent and perspective essential to leadership in a challenging world. Two AUCA seniors share their stories about their recent work experiences that helped them learn valuable management skills and foster impactful technological advancements.

**FARZONA  
KHAIDAROVA**  
TEAM LEADER AT NEOBIS

*"In January 2020, I became a team leader of the project management department of Neobis, a student organization that provides opportunities for students to expand their knowledge and practice their computer skills by working on real projects and building a network with professionals in the tech field. I was in charge of developing a study plan for project managers, evaluating their work and assessing their project functionality.*

*In addition, I led two teams working on two different projects which are now in production. The first project was an app for the NGO Search for Common Ground. I led a team of developers who worked on an app to enhance religious literacy among population. The second project was aimed at creating a webpage, a scan page and admin panel for a delivery business. We were able to optimize the company's processes by developing important features of the scanner pistol to track their packages, generate invoices and other documents. By using the platform that we created, the company will be able to deliver packages from any country and track their deliveries easily.*

*During these 3 months, I strengthened my abilities in product development, project management, negotiation with customers and daily communication. I strongly believe that these skills will be highly useful in the future."*



## LEARNING TO LEAD THROUGH NEW EXPERIENCES

CONTINUED

*“In February 2020, I started to work as a product manager at NambaFood, a first-choice option company for delivery in Bishkek. It helps people get nearly everything that can be bought and delivered to the door. To automate the delivery processes the company uses several software tools:*

- website and client mobile apps for placing orders;
- manager panel for proceeding with orders;
- operator panel and courier mobile app for assigning with orders and tracking them; and
- admin panel for checking reports and stats, and managing staff.

*My main responsibilities are to work collaboratively with the software team and manage five software bugs, newly added features, and make sure that the whole system runs smoothly through audits and testing. Besides, in addition to this model, the company has two more additional business models, such as mini white label and full white label models where another brand is created, and NambaFood is cloned in full. Therefore, I work with external third parties to assess partnerships and work on the development of the product for them. In 2019, NambaFood partnered with iSLEGTM to launch a similar delivery service in Turkmenistan. Now it works autonomously under a separate brand, and we expect more full white label partners to be on board. Also, in 2020, we launched a contactless delivery service due to the increased demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*I started this work not so long ago; however, I have learned a lot about product management, product development, requirements analysis, setting roadmaps and some exciting tools such as Agile and Jira. I think it is just the beginning, and I am excited to learn more.”*

### SEZIM ZHENISHBEKOVA PRODUCT MANAGER AT NAMBAFOOD



## PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD



Throughout their undergraduate studies, Fellows use many opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills on and off campus, learn about local industries, establish important business contacts, and explore potential career paths. According to the program statistics, about 92% of Fellows either secure employment or enroll in graduate or internship programs upon their graduation which demonstrates their career readiness. Among those who have already secured employment is **Paluan Rimov** which is not surprising at all given his remarkable internship experiences and multiple awards in business competitions. In the passages below, Paluan and other fellows share their stories about their employment prospects and meaningful internship experiences that helped them shape their career goals.



of Fellows either secure employment or enroll in graduate or internship programs upon their graduation which demonstrates their career readiness

## PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD

CONTINUED

### CHOOSING PWC

BY PALUAN RIMOV

During October 2019, I was really worried about my career and which company I should decide to choose as a starting point. I applied to all Big 4 companies for positions in the auditing and advisory departments. I received offers from all four of them. However, after many discussions with professors and people working in this field, I decided to choose transaction advisory at PwC.

At PwC, I work currently as an intern and it is different from my previous internships. First, I don't feel like an intern. I participate in many projects, such as Mergers & Acquisitions and Financial Due Diligence. I work with a brilliant team. Everyone in my team has their own competitive advantage. One person may be better in legal issues, but another one is better in the financial aspects of the company.

I have big responsibilities, and I feel that if I fail that the whole team would face issues because of me. What I found out is that people work really hard, and I always feel that I need to learn from them and work more. I advise sophomore and junior students to apply for internship positions at the Big 4 companies as they provide valuable professional experience.



### TEST PREP APP FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN KYRGYZSTAN

BY YIMAN ALTYNBEK UULU

We started the spring semester as usual before the pandemic broke out. However, it is not preventing us from being successful. As usual, we continued studying and learning new and amazing topics and receiving good grades in quizzes and midterms. The most important event during this semester for me was becoming an official member of Neobis, a mobile application development club.

At the moment, I am working on an educational project of national importance. Specifically, I am developing a mobile app for graduating high school students that will help them prepare for a very important national testing which can decide their future. Besides, I have been saving up my scholarship money and was able to purchase a personal computer which I need so much for my current work and future projects. My determination to pursue computer science has grown even stronger, and I already feel that I am getting closer to my dreams.



### MY FIRST INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE WITH TICKETON

BY SAVSANGUL MAMADLOIQOVA

My internship with Ticketon started in November 2019. Ticketon sells online tickets to various events, including concerts, movies, and theatres. Since this was my first internship. I was working under the supervision of the HR director of the company. As HR management is my specialization, it was a great experience for me to work in this department and to prepare myself for what I should expect in the future when I start my career in the HR sector. I was involved in preparing labor contracts for new employees, and documents for hiring and dismissal. Now, that I have gained some background skills, I feel I am ready to pursue other internships with companies with favorable and supportive corporate culture, similar to the atmosphere at Ticketon.



SAVSANGUL WITH HER SUPERVISOR

## PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD

CONTINUED



### REDISCOVERING MY PASSION

BY INDIRA MANJIYEVA

Starting from December 18, I had a pleasure to intern in the audit department of KPMG. Through this opportunity, I had not only actively participated in the audit of several companies such as South Mining Chemical Company, Qazaq Air, and SSM-Oil, but also experienced the whole working dynamics and processes in the company.

I was actually able to observe how the business world works and gain industry-specific knowledge, since the companies I audited were from very different backgrounds (oil & gas, uranium, and commercial sector). It was a breathtaking experience to see all the theoretical parts of audit and accounting I have learned in class come to life. Not only that, but to be able to see and understand all the important details, that I would have never even thought of before, influence the auditing process; and work with such professionals who notice such details immediately is an extremely inspiring experience. I've been in direct contact with the companies' top management personnel while working on pending questions, which seemed quite overwhelming at the beginning but turned out to be the greatest learning experience of my life. Apart from that, I really felt a strong sense of belonging. It felt as if I were finally in the place where I was supposed to be all along. This helped me rediscover the passion for my major and acted as a type of reality check. I met tremendously smart, talented people, whom I proudly call friends now.

### EXPLORING INVESTMENT SECTOR IN KAZAKHSTAN

BY GAVKHARKHON MAMADZHANOVA

I consider internships as an essential part of my professional development. I have worked in two different microcredit depository organizations and understood the way this type of financial institutions functions. However, I wanted to diversify and strengthen my experience in the field of finance. Thus, I decided to apply for an internship with Resources Capital Group (RCG), Almaty. After passing three stages of the selection process, I received an internship offer. RCG is a private investment group specializing in the natural resources sector in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The company attracts technical and financial professionals with deep industry expertise and diverse background.

I started my internship in the investments department in January 2020. My main responsibilities include analyzing primary data of projects and developing financial models for projects. First, the tasks were challenging because I was not familiar with the mining industry at all. However, now I can say that I have acquired important knowledge in geology, particularly about the mining industry. I have achieved this with the help of introductory trainings, assistance from my colleges, and involvement in daily operations of the company.



## PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD

CONTINUED

### DIVERSIFYING SKILLS THROUGH INTERNSHIP WITH COCA-COLA

BY BAYAN BEKBAS

To achieve my professional and career goals, I started my internship at Coca-Cola. I was approached by the HR of the company during the KIMEP job fair and later received an invitation for a job interview. I was thinking a lot before accepting the offer, because the position was for a marketing intern, while I am studying finance. However, I decided that any experience is valuable and there are always things to learn. I was right, because now, after working for 7 months at Coca-Cola, I can say that I have had great experience - I am involved not only in marketing, but also in finance. I submit different financial statements and reports and follow up on all financial procedures such as budget allocation and organization's payments. I've acquired huge experience in law because I deal with many contracts and legal issues. Coca-Cola is one of the world's famous and largest brands in the beverage industry, and I am happy to be a part of it. It is a great pleasure to feel valued by the company. You are treated like a professional. For example, my supervisor always asks for my opinion regarding different issues and says that my point of view is important.

One of my biggest successes as an intern is the Coca-Cola NY promo activation. It was fully responsible for it, and it was very successful. It targeted more than 100,000 potential customers. The outcome exceeded expectations, and I received recognition from my colleagues and managers. Leading different projects, initiating them and co-working with agencies, media, and IT teams helped me develop new skills, become stronger, and feel more confident about my future.



ZEBOJON RASULOVA (RIGHT)

### HONING DIGITAL MARKETING SKILLS AT TECHAIM

BY ZEBOJON RASULOVA

I have been always interested in writing. Recently, I came up with the determination to develop my writing skills further. For this reason, I applied and was accepted to the SMM intern position at Techaim in the beginning of the spring semester. Techaim is a public foundation funded by the US Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic. The main goal of Techaim is to develop a community of girls and women in IT and STEAM ('Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math.) through mentoring, exchange programs, training, and internships. I have been writing posts for the organization's Instagram and Facebook pages.

As a member of the Techaim team, I have access to all Techaim training programs, and I am part of the platform for IT and STEAM professionals. Most of the Techaim team are techwomen alumni who provide mentoring and training. They check and give feedback on my posts. I am improving my skills in digital marketing and writing through this mentorship. I am learning how to transform complex and big information into simple and understandable texts, and learning a great deal about graphic design and digital marketing, the areas that are in high demand. As an Economics major, I find this experience very valuable for developing my skills in business, IT and STEAM.



## ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH COMPETITIONS



GAVKHARKHON (LEFT) WITH PARTICIPANTS OF CFA CHALLENGE 2020



ZIYOVUDDIN NAJMIDDINOV



ALUA CHYNTEMIROVA

Every year, U.S.-CAEF Fellows participate in challenging business contests and case cups to test their knowledge and skills, and take advantage of student grant competitions. We are pleased that KIMEP Fellows **Gavkharkhon Mamamdzhanova** and sophomore **Alua Chyntemirova** fared well in business competitions in Almaty, while AUCA fellows **Ziyovuddin Najmiddinov**, **Nurzada Abdivalieva**, and **Valeriya An** won a student grant to promote leadership among Kyrgyz youth.

### RUNNER UP IN CFA RESEARCH CHALLENGE 2020

*“In September 2019, there were two teams selected by KIMEP faculty members to participate in CFA Research Challenge 2020. This year we had to conduct research and provide an equity report on Halyk Bank, a systematically important financial institution in Kazakhstan. Our team included students from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We became finalists of the local round. On February 23, 2020 we had a chance to present our equity report in front of professional judges. There were five finalists in the local round representing Nazarbayev University, Westminster International University in Tashkent, Suleyman Demirel University and KIMEP University. Our team took second place followed by the Westminster International University among the local finalists.*

*These were three months of hard work, but the experience was incredible. Although, it was a challenging project, I am happy that I took part in the competition because it gave me a baggage of practical knowledge. We were able to understand the concept of equity market in detail, and developed our presentation, teamwork and communication skills. It is a great starting point for finance students.”*



GAVKHARKHON MAMADZHANOVA

## ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH COMPETITIONS

CONTINUED



NURZADA ABDIVALIEVA (LEFT)

VALERIYA AN (RIGHT)

### SECOND IN TECHNODOM CASE COMPETITION

“On February 8, I took part in the case competition held by Technodom, the biggest store of electronics and appliances in Kazakhstan. Students that took part in the game were from different universities of our city. We were given a few hours to solve a real problem related to the sales of certain product lines in their stores. In our case, it was a line of electronic toothbrushes and general progress directions of the firm. Our team of four presented our solutions to the Technodom specialists, and we won second place. As a result, we received certificates, presents, and were offered a tour of the head office, and an internship in the commercial department of the company.”



ALUA CHYNTEMIROVA

### WINNING A SIDP GRANT



“These past months have been extremely tough in terms of studying. There were many quizzes and midterms at our university. Despite being so busy, my small group of motivated U.S.-CAEF fellows- **Nurzada Abdivalieva**, cohort 2017, **Valeriya An** and I (cohort 2019)- applied for a grant sponsored by the AUCA’s Social Initiative Development Program (SIDP) and won \$600 to implement our project called “Speak to Lead Globally”.

Our project is focused on the development of public speaking, critical thinking and leadership skills among high school students in Osh through a series of trainings that will prepare them for a speech contest. We are planning to involve 9-11-graders from Aga Khan, Olymp and Razzakov schools. The selection process will be held online. Once participants are selected, professional trainers will conduct several training sessions in public speaking, debates and leadership. Such topics are not always discussed at schools. Thus, by implementing our project, we will be able to provide high school students with priceless, engaging training.

Our initial plan was to organize a speech contest in April 2020. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we have to postpone our event until the summer. But we are still very optimistic about our project. We are very committed to it and have interesting plans, so we will try our very best to complete this project successfully.

I would like to thank my U.S.-CAEF mentor, **Aiana Rysbekova** (cohort 2018), who taught me how to write a proposal and present my ideas and goals effectively. Our budget was calculated perfectly by **Nurzada Abdivalieva**. The support of my peer fellows and the motivation that I receive from the U.S.-CAEF workshops have played a major role in securing this grant and will help us achieve our project goals.”



ZIYOVUDDIN NAJMIDDINOV

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### BASKETBALL FOR ALL

BY KAIRAT TAGAEV, SANZHAR ORMUKOV,  
AIGUL SAPAROVA, & DASTAN BAKTYBEKOV



Every semester, U.S.-CAEF Fellows are involved in projects that benefit society. They take part in a wide range of initiatives that help them make a difference in their communities while developing skills to become socially responsible business leaders. Fellows shared their stories about their recent community service projects that they were able to implement before the lockdown.

Exceptionally inclusive educational system that we witnessed during our exchange year in the USA, where each student was given equal rights and opportunities despite their abilities, was the greatest inspiration for us. It later became the core of the project we were involved in. **Kairat Tagaev, Aigul Saparova, Sanzhar Ormukov, and Dastan Baktybekov - all U.S.-CAEF fellows -** decided to create an inclusive world for kids with autism and Down syndrome by implementing the SIDP project named “Basketball For All”.

This project had huge support: funding from the Student Initiative Development Program at AUCA, FLEX, and Li- Ning Kyrgyzstan, a sporting goods store. From the beginning of March, our team conducted open practices for kids. We believe that it is possible to prepare these kids to become engaged members of our society through sports. Each of us made a unique contribution to make this project possible:

Kairat was mainly responsible for preparing plans for the practices and implementing them. During the practices, he coordinated other volunteers. In collaboration with the coach from Astana, we were able to come up with a unique practice plan that helped better develop the kids’ physical and mental abilities. Sanzhar was in charge of booking the gym at AUCA for two months, buying basketball balls from the funds of the AUCA Senate, and helping train the kids. Aigul and Dastan conducted icebreakers and warm-ups and helped organize lunches and snacks.

The kids were incredibly motivated, which also inspired us to work harder, improve all of the aspects of our project and attract more public awareness. Basketball is just one of the many ways of helping kids with Down syndrome and autism. We are sure that every person can find his own way to resolve this issue.

We truly hope that this project will be the beginning of something big. **We encourage people to pay more attention to such vulnerable members of our society because they need our help.**

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

CONTINUED

## HELPING BELOVODSKY ORPHANAGE

BY NURMUKHAMAD TURKBAEV



NURMUKHAMAD TURKBAEV (RIGHT)

Since 2018 I have been involved in a food drive initiative organized by the AUCA New Generation Academy students to support children of Belovodskiy orphanage.

Participants are divided into groups and prepare meals in the dormitory or at home which is later sold at AUCA. The menu included the Central Asian, Afghan, and Korean cuisines. We put the price for the meals lower than at the AUCA Kitchenette hoping that people would buy our homemade food. As a result, we gathered \$200 (14000 KGS).

We used that money to buy groceries, hygiene items, and stationary for the orphanage. In addition, we prepared a special entertainment program for the kids which included dances, songs, drawing contests, and fun riddles.

*To make the program sustainable, we would like to organize this initiative every year and **expand it beyond AUCA and involve communities in Bishkek.***



## POWER OF MENTORSHIP

### BOOSTING LEARNING THROUGH MENTORSHIP

**Avina Abytaeva** and **Aiana Rysbekova** who took advantage of the U.S.-CAEF mentorship program are grateful to their mentors, older Fellows, for their guidance and support that helped them transition into their first year of college, and navigate their experiences, and shape their academic goals. The program, according to many fellows, has become a proven approach to boost rich learning and development for both mentees and mentors. Encouraged by their positive experiences, both students became mentors to younger fellows, and sought out off-campus mentoring opportunities that enhanced their knowledge and skills further.



*"I am honored to become one of the mentors of the Kyrgyz-Korean 1 + 2 project organized by Kyrgyz Global, an organization uniting young and promising compatriots who live and study around the world. Mentors are students from different countries. Each mentor is assigned a mentee for a year to help the student set academic and professional goals, apply to universities, and grow personally. This is a very responsible task for mentors as they need to find appropriate methods of communication with their mentees. Mentoring turned out to be not so easy, but, it is a rewarding experience which helped me appreciate my U.S.-CAEF mentor **Bekzat Sadyrbaev** even more. Bekzat motivated and guided me through the difficult times at the university for which I am very grateful!"*



AVINA ABYTAEVA

## POWER OF MENTORSHIP

CONTINUED



AIANA RYSBEKOVA WITH HER NEW MENTOR AIZHAN DZHUMALIEVA

*“During the freshmen year, U.S.-CAEF provides each freshman with a mentor. I was really lucky to have **Olga Pykhova** as my mentor. She helped me to adapt to the new environment during my freshman year and guided me through my questions and concerns by sharing her own experience. Now, with each step I take towards my goals, I realize that having a mentor can be an asset. Thus, by applying to the AmCham Mentorship Program, I wanted to expand my understanding of mentorship. I was hoping to meet the person with whom I can discuss my goals related to my professional and personal development. I was honored to become a mentee of Aizhan Dzhumaliev, dean of the School of Entrepreneurship and Business Administration at AUCA. Despite her main occupation as a dean, Aizhan is also PR and marketing specialist of Saratan, a trade company. Already during our first meeting we discussed my professional goals and created my career map.*

***Being a part of the AmCham mentorship program is not only about learning from your mentor, but also gaining valuable skills and insights through participating in trainings on self-development, self-branding, and goal setting.***

*In addition, the program is an opportunity to meet professionals from different fields and expand your network. In addition, I can strengthen my own skills and be a better mentor for my mentee, **Ziyovuddin Najmiddinov.**”*



AIANA WITH HER U.S.-CAEF MENTOR OLGA PYKHOVA



AIANA WITH HER U.S.-CAEF MENTEE



AIANA RYSBEKOVA

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 crisis has shaken the world, and it continues to impose massive uncertainty about public health and economic well-being. During these challenging times, many people came together to support one another, and we are proud of our Fellows and Alumni who are making a difference with their contributions in response to COVID-19 organizing charitable campaigns to support vulnerable populations, producing masks for front-line workers, providing free COVID-19 tests to people from high-risk groups, and arranging motivating webinars for the members of the U.S.-CAEF community.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

# RALLYING U.S.-CAEF TO SUPPORT THOSE IN NEED

*“This experience taught us to be grateful for the opportunities that we have, for the ability to help and lead others.”*



**AIANA RYSBEKOVA**

AUCA'22  
PRESIDENT OF YSEP

On March 24th, the government of the Kyrgyz Republic issued a decree declaring the state of emergency from March 25th to April 15th, which was later extended to May 10th. COVID-19 not only locked people in their houses, but also left many people without money to purchase necessities. Most Kyrgyz families around Bishkek and in the surrounding regions work for multiple jobs and receive the wages, which usually vary from \$6 to \$12 per day. The state of emergency put a halt to everything and forced people to stay at home.

The pandemic could have turned into a night-mare for many families. Social media started to buzz with messages from families who were running out of groceries and had no idea how to obtain the money to purchase food.

**Karina Kussainova**, AUCA'14, read about this problem arising in her home country of Kyrgyzstan in late March. It struck her heartstrings to learn that her fellow Central Asians were suffering during the ongoing pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. While Karina is herself currently living and going to school in Toronto, Canada, she wanted to find a means by which she could support even a few families back in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, she created a GoFundMe campaign with the modest goal of raising \$2,000 that would go to at least ten families in order to provide one month's worth of groceries for each of them.

Since the launch of the GoFundMe on March 27th, the campaign had raised \$2,425 across sixty-four donations, plus another \$200 in direct donations in Kyrgyzstan. While a small portion of this money went towards the costs of running the campaign and wiring the money to Kyrgyzstan, they were able to use \$2337 of the amount raised on GoFundMe towards the purchase of groceries.

Much of this effort was certainly thanks to her recruitment of the current members of the **Youth Social Entrepreneurship Project (YSEP)** back in Bishkek, led by their current student President and U.S.-CAEF Fellow, **Aiana Rysbekova**. YSEP is a student organization at AUCA that was founded by Karina herself. They have provided an invaluable resource for the GoFundMe campaign, as they had taken on the responsibility of identifying the families that the donations would be going towards, some of which were those Karina had read about online. Once the donations were collected from GoFundMe by Karina, these funds were wired to YSEP responsible for dispersing the donations to the families in need.

One of the most incredible aspects of this campaign is not merely that it was accomplished, but that the vast majority of donations were from members of our U.S.-CAEF family. Alumni both in Central Asia and from around the world provided donations big and small, ranging from \$5 to \$200! The success of this campaign is in no small part thanks to our wonderful and caring alumni and fellows.

**Thanks to Karina, YSEP, and the donations of everyone who participated in the GoFundMe, a total of 26 different families, which amounted to 116 adults and children, were able to receive much needed groceries and medication. The success of the campaign exceeded everyone's expectations.**

These families were spread out across four different regions- Talas, Chuy, Dialal-Abad, and Bishkek- and each was in a different situation. Despite this, they all shared a common tragedy caused by the onset of the pandemic: the loss of their only source of income. They were all grateful for the kindness of the donors, no matter the size of their donation because every single one helped.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

Following the success of the campaign and nearing the final days of it, our U.S.-CAEF team reached out to ask Karina a few questions about her experience:

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CARRY OUT THIS GOFUNDME?

An article that I read online about families in Kyrgyzstan struggling with hunger. I already knew that many people in Kyrgyzstan rely on their income day-to-day and have very little savings. I couldn't imagine how people would provide for themselves during the curfew. When I read the article, I felt that the situation I am in is a blessing. And I concluded that while I could have helped only one family, that it would be better to call out to other kind hearts to try to raise enough funds to provide for more people.

### WHAT WERE YOUR ORIGINAL EXPECTATIONS FOR HOW THE GOFUNDME WOULD PLAY OUT?

I thought that most donations would come from the U.S. and Canadian citizens, but to my delight, it was mostly Central Asians and U.S.-CAEF that really made it happen. We are scattered all around the world, but our hearts are still with Central Asia.

### AFTER THE CAMPAIGN BEGAN, HOW DID YOUR PLANS CHANGE FOR THE GOFUNDME?

I am extremely thankful to the YSEP team in Kyrgyzstan – those guys are on fire. I didn't have to ask them twice – they did all the



work that was asked of them and more. I have never seen such active and caring young adults. After the campaign started, I was waking up to over 200 messages in our chat. They planned, they organized, and they carried out the work that needed to be done. I am afraid to forget to mention some of them, but I'll try to name them all: **Olga Pykhova, Aiana Rysbekova, Sevara Tadzhibaeva, Sezim Zhenishbekova, Muhammad Boymatov, Nurmukhamad Turkbayev, Avina Abytaeva, Farangis Mirzobekova, Sodiq Mirzoev** (friend of U.S.-CAEF), **Islambek Ashyraliev, Suiun Zootbekova, and Yerkebulan Askarbekov.**

### AS THE CAMPAIGN IS COMING TO A CLOSE, HOW ARE YOU FEELING ABOUT THE WHOLE THING?

I am feeling grateful and hopeful.



KARINA KUSSAINOVA

I am forever grateful to the alumni and students, not only from AUCA but from KIMEP too. **Uncertain times reveal the worst and the best in people. I am proud to see that U.S.-CAEF is a big, united, and caring family.**

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED



## PRINTING PROTECTION FROM PESTILENCE

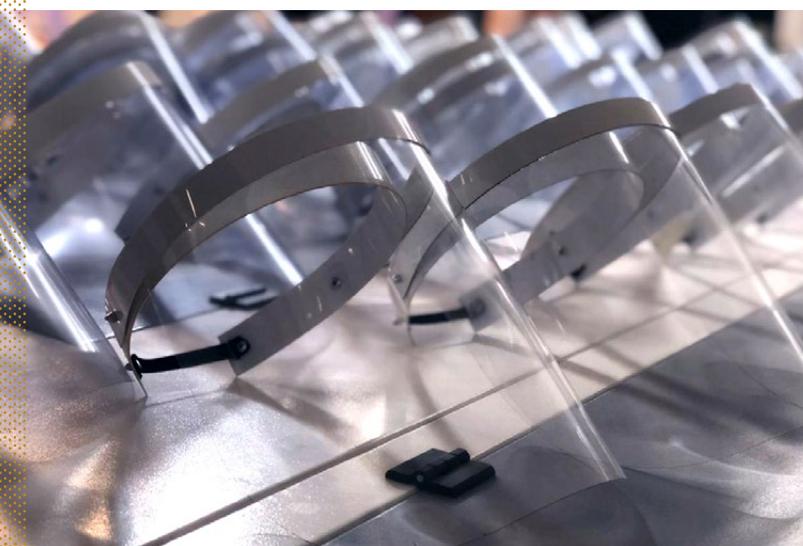
**Irina Abasova**, KIMEP'12, and her company Creat3D have begun the production of plastic face-shields that can be used in conjunction with a regular mask and protective glasses to further reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19. Irina saw that there was a need for more protective medical equipment for medical professionals throughout Kazakhstan. She thought about different ways by which she could utilize the resources available to mitigate the risk of infecting others. Knowing what her own equipment is capable of, she worked with her company to design their plastic face-shields.

In early April, Creat3D produced a limited batch of face-shields that they provided to medical specialists who provided feedback about the design, protective qualities, and comfort of their creation. Once they had this feedback, they adjusted the design and were ready for mass production.

The plan Creat3D has laid out will have them producing a minimum of 1000 masks per day and will leave room for them to ramp up production by four to even six thousand if they need to. They have already begun to receive requests from all across Kazakhstan for these face-shields, and part of their plan is to donate shields to medical staff as well as to those who are in everyday contact with many people, thus face a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19.

One hurdle that Creat3D is facing in achieving their goal however is the rapidly evolving regulations surrounding the function of workplaces in Kazakhstan. This being the case, Irina and Creat3D are working with the city government daily to ensure that Creat3D can continue producing the face-shields. Luckily, on April 23rd, Irina announced via Facebook that Creat3D has received certification to be sold within Kazakhstan.

In addition to producing these face-shields, Irina is also offering consultations to anyone who would also like to produce the face-shields outside of Kazakhstan. They are also assisting a friend of Irina's who is producing single-use protective combination suits that provide a full-body barrier to prevent exposure to COVID-19.



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

500 | FREE COVID-19  
COMMUNITY TESTINGДИСТАНЦИОННОЕ  
ЛЕЧЕНИЕ  
КОРОНАВИРУС

YULIYA BALIYEVA (RIGHT)

*ALUMNA  
STARTS TESTING  
FOR COVID-19  
IN ALMATY*

**Yuliya Baliyeva**, KIMEP'13, Founder and General Director of Euroconnection, has a network of three medical laboratories under the INVITRO franchise name in Almaty. In one of her labs, Grinlab, her lab technicians have begun testing for COVID-19. In partnership with Olymp medical lab, Grinlab has begun providing free tests for people from high-risk groups. Since April 27th they have already been able to provide around 500 free tests to members of the community. Her lab is also providing paid tests. Details for these can be found on their website – [www.grinlab.kz](http://www.grinlab.kz).

**About Yuliya:** As a mother of two children who was struggling to find adequate pediatric care, Yuliya felt a great need for quality medical services in Kazakhstan. This realization prompted her to carry out market research, which identified major problems in the healthcare system and inspired her to create Euroconnection in 2015, a clinical laboratory for the detection, diagnosis and treatment of disease. Since that time, Yuliya has been able to expand Euroconnection, having opened her third lab last year under the INVITRO laboratories franchise, a leader in laboratory diagnostics, which conducts more than 1,800 medical tests.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

## TURNING BREADMAKING INTO BREADWINNING

BY ZARNIGOR FAIZIMAHMADZODA



NILUFAR (FRONT) AND NIGORA (RIGHT)



Our U.S.-CAEF and Capstone Alumni **Nilufar Umarova**, KIMEP'19, and **Nigora Burhonova**, KIMEP'19, participated in a four-day training session organized by UNICEF and UNDP. They had an intensive curriculum where the mentors taught them how to define a problem, find the cause of it, draw a map of interested parties, and find an innovative solution. This project was focused on finding means for women to enter the labor market as well as create a friendly environment for people with disabilities. When asked about their project, Nilufar said,

*“Our project will hopefully help married women, who are mostly housewives, to be able to monetize their ability to cook and bake. In other words, we are planning to create a platform to simplify the process of selling their goods to people who value homemade food.”*

The U.S.-CAEF staff and participants have embraced all-online communication, and even found unexpected benefits from this new arrangement, such as the possibility of conducting joint training and teambuilding activities for AUCA and KIMEP fellows and alumni, which boosted the participants' motivation and engagement, and an opportunity for the U.S.-CAEF alumni not only in Central Asia but across the globe to connect with current fellows through virtual panel discussions, webinars and meetings. Although the staff has always been aware of various technological tools, the pandemic forced them to rethink the way they work and focus on a wider use of technologies that can bring more efficiency, and stimulate more interaction and collaboration between all members of the U.S.-CAEF community.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

# Alumni & Fellows Embrace Online Communication

ALUMNI & FELLOW CONTRIBUTORS: ZHIBEK KAMALBEK KYZY, NURMUKHAMMAD TURKBAEV, AIGUL SAPAROVA, & AIANA RYSBEKOVA

Despite the disruptions imposed by the global lockdown, U.S.-CAEF continued providing Fellows with professional development and teambuilding activities using technological solutions. Since the start of the quarantine, over ten U.S.-CAEF online events have been organized. Of these, seven events were arranged with the help of the program Alumni and Fellows who embraced all-online communication, and even found unexpected benefits from this new arrangement such as the possibility of conducting joint events for both AUCA and KIMEP Fellows and Alumni, which boosted the participants' motivation and engagement, provided an opportunity for the U.S.-CAEF alumni not only in Central Asia but from across the globe to connect with Fellows through virtual panel discussions. According to participants' feedback, the sessions lifted everyone's spirits, stimulated more interaction between all members of the U.S.-CAEF community, and made everyone feel connected and hopeful during these difficult times.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

## CV WRITING SKILLS WEBINAR

During the session, **Aidana Odeichuk**, KIMEP'12, shared tips on how to make resumes stand out and talked about the top qualities and skills employers currently look for in successful candidates. Fellows appreciated that prior to the meeting Aidana had gathered participants' CVs and based her presentation on common errors which made the webinar particularly useful and efficient.

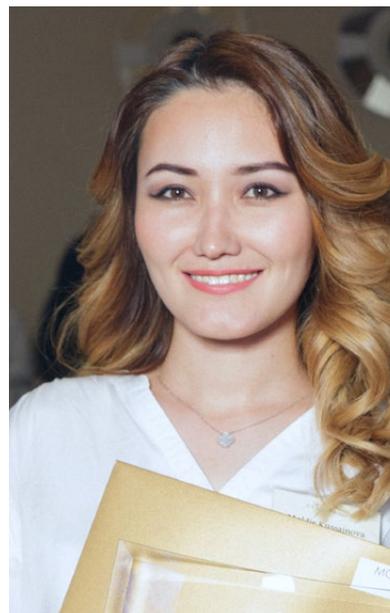
An accounting major, Aidana joined Procter & Gamble right after graduation, where she gained a broad experience in the FMCG corporate finance area. She started her career as an intern and worked her way up to the position of the Senior Financial Analyst responsible for budget planning and control of 28 brands, and 9 categories in five Central Asian countries.



## LINKEDIN FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**Moldir Kussainova** conducted a training session on ways to harness the power of LinkedIn to develop their careers and professional networks. Moldir explained what LinkedIn is, how to use it, and provided interesting statistics on LinkedIn users worldwide. She shared how to use LinkedIn algorithms to maximize the effect of a LinkedIn profile and tips on how to fill out each section of the LinkedIn resume. Participants were inspired to start using LinkedIn!

Upon graduation from KIMEP in 2012, Moldir worked as a trade marketing manager at Henkel Central Asia & Caucasus, and as a customer manager at Beiersdorf Almaty, and later co-founded Foxout.kz, a ticketing company. Currently, Moldir is working for Financial Technologies in the Growth Team. Aside from her work, Moldir mentored a team of high school girls who became finalists of the Technovation Challenge 2019 in Silicon Valley.



## HOW TO GET A JOB OF YOUR DREAMS

**Aidai Topchubaeva**, KIMEP '18, talked with Fellows about the importance of setting clear career goals. She encouraged students to take advantage of the professional development opportunities such as internships, business competitions, student clubs, and research projects which can help them learn about the business environment, explore their interests, find their niche and shape their career goals. As a winner of the highly competitive Mars Leadership Experience Program, Aidai introduced the participants to the program and shared her insights about her work experience with Mars in Minsk, Belarus where she is currently posted in the finance department of the company for one year.



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED



AZATBEK ISMAILOV

## HOW TO ACE INTERVIEWS

“Applying for jobs, internships, and even scholarship programs can be intimidating due to one final step of the selection process – you guessed it right: interviews! This is the last, but not the least important step to land your dream job. But what if you are nervous? What should you prepare beforehand? What kind of questions should you ask interviewers at the end?” wrote **Zhibek Kamalbek kyzy** about the discussion points of this webinar which was conducted by U.S.-CAEF Program Specialist **Uranbek Turdumbaev** and AUCA alumnus **Azatbek Ismailov**, AUCA’18, who is currently employed as consultant in the deal advisory department of KPMG in Almaty.

All attendees provided positive feedback and praised the speakers

for sharing valuable interview tips, examples from real life situations and their own personal experiences. “It was a very useful webinar that provided us with practical tips and advice. I really liked the idea of having online sessions, we should definitely keep organizing them even after the quarantine,” shared junior **Kairat Tagaev**.

Freshman **Aisulu Ryspaeva**, wrote, “I was interested in this topic for a long time and was happy to receive such insights during my freshman year. It will help me apply to various programs and internships! The best part, for me, was when speakers explained topics using life examples from their interview cases. The idea with webinars is amazing, especially in such times when we need motivation and advice. I greatly enjoyed the warm atmosphere created by the speakers and organizers.”

## AFTER GRADUATION PATHWAYS

The webinar was conducted by two AUCA alumnae, **Yelena Vorobey**, AUCA’14, and **Gulnaza Khalmanbetova**, AUCA’17, and KIMEP alumnus, **Jahongir Rahimov**, KIMEP’18. During the session each spoke about their own experiences and unique pathways following graduation.

**Yelena Vorobey** graduated with honors from AUCA in 2014 and was selected to participate in the U.S. International Capstone Internship Program the following fall. Upon her return to Kazakhstan, she began an internship with KPMG that turned into full-time employment. Less than a year later, she received an Erasmus Mundus Mobility scholarship and enrolled in a master’s program in Knowledge, Industrial, and Local Development at Université Paris. Nearing the conclusion of her graduate program, she applied for E.ON SE’s competitive rotational trainee program and was selected from among 3000 candidates to become a business controller at the German company. She also served as the Alumni Association’s president from 2015 to 2016.



YELENA VOROBEBY

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED



GULNAZA KHALMANBETOVA

**Gulnaza Khalmanbetova** graduated from AUCA in 2017 and began her professional career with American Councils' Bishkek office working on the U.S.-CAEF Program. She has since been promoted to Program Coordinator and now works with the USG Small Alumni Grants Program and was particularly involved in the "Young Inventors" Program. Outside this role, Gulnaza is active in her community by organizing and promoting various social initiatives in Kyrgyzstan. Many of the initiatives focus on promoting entrepreneurship among mothers.

Originally from Tajikistan, **Jahongir Rahimov**, KIMEP'18 was selected to participate in the Capstone Internship Program the following fall much like Elena. During his time in Washington D.C. he interned with Manchester Trade and upon his return he joined KPMG in Almaty in January of 2019. Since then, within just a year and a half, Jahongir has been promoted a few times, and is currently a Financial Consultant in the Deal Advisory Department.

*"Each speaker had around 30 minutes to answer all questions collected from fellows before the session. Yelena shared her experience about pursuing a master's degree through Erasmus Mundus, and how it helped her build her career. Yelena provided valuable advice on some essential steps that everyone should take into consideration before applying to grad schools. Gulnaza, a working mother, shared how she manages to balance family and work, and even finds time for creating courses and social projects. Jahongir told us what steps he has taken to be accepted to KPMG. He explained why he decided to start working right away after graduation. In addition, Jahongir shared some valuable resources for professional development that Fellows could use beyond the university material.*

*Overall, each speaker shared their perspectives on different pathways after graduation. Their presentations gave us all much food for thought. Everyone was pleased to hear sincere answers and real examples from real-life choices. Fellows learned that there really is no right or wrong path to take after college, that whatever we choose, we need to make the best of it,"*

- **Aiana Rysbekova.**



JAHONGIR RAHIMOV



IZAT OSMONOV

## HOW TO FIND MY OWN SPHERE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT & HOW TO CHOOSE INTERNSHIPS?

**Nurmukhammad Turkbaev** who was the moderator of this session wrote about the webinar:

"The webinar with **Izat Osmonov** was one of the most productive ones! Because of Izat's ability to interact with the audience, the workshop lasted for two hours. Since many students were asking questions regarding internships, career development, and planning life after graduation, Izat Osmonov, with his baggage of experiences and knowledge, was a perfect match! Izat graduated from AUCA in 2013 majoring in Business Administration, and currently, he works as Financial Controller Analyst at ExxonMobil in Budapest.

During the webinar, Izat used a very personalized method of presenting the topics to the audience, tailoring his presentation to the needs of each cohort. For instance, for seniors, it was interesting to learn about Izat's

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

experience as an M.A. student in Global Economic Policy in Global Markets at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. For freshmen and sophomores, it was interesting to learn about his work/ internship experience at the microcredit company FINCA, inter-company secondment program in Lahore, Pakistan, Schneider Electric

and KPMG in Budapest, AIESEC project in Moldova, and others. Moreover, he shared the information about free platforms where fellows can find work and internship opportunities.

One of the attendees, freshman **Ziyovuddin Najmiddinov** shared his feedback about the event: “I became

really inspired by this powerful webinar. It was well-organized, timekeeping was exceptional, a well-balanced variety of topics, well-prepared, a lot of useful and relevant advice. I keep admiring the expertise of the U.S.-CAEF alumni and the way they present themselves. I am grateful for Izat’s care and support which I find very inspiring.”

## PROGRAMMING OR DATA ANALYTICS?

Sophomore **Aigul Saparova** who attended this webinar wrote the following about the event:

“In the constantly changing and developing work environment, more and more organizations are seeking for professionals with the skills and knowledge in IT and data analytics. Many U.S.-CAEF fellows and alumni are now learning about the industry and basic coding languages. **Andrey Leskin**, AUCA’12, a self-taught data scientist who created the data analytics department at Zensoft IO, and **Samatbek Osmonov** who started his career as iOS mobile application developer at the same company in 2018. The alumni shared about the turn their careers took, and how they use their business knowledge gained at AUCA.

**Samatbek** talked about how he started coding iOS applications while studying finance and successfully cracking business cases at championships. He shared that everyone can start learning programming languages, and their knowledge and experience in other spheres as finance, marketing, economics or mathematics would



SAMATBEK OSMONOV

actually be a great asset. Having a mentor, said Samatbek, who can support the learning process is a helpful and effective way of learning coding. Currently, students with business background are in demand and are often hired as project managers – they act as a bridge between developers and clients. Samatbek advised attendees to consider this profession as an option. Then, he proceeded to advising several free online courses teaching coding languages from which fellows can start diving into the ocean of the ‘mysterious’ world of programming.

A data analyst specialist must have at least some knowledge of basic programming languages, such as Python. Thus, **Andrey Leskin**, shared his experience of self-studying and learning programming and data analytics ahead of his peers. He motivated students to study independently online and talked

about the importance of self-discipline during the learning process. Moreover, Andrey answered fellows’ questions, and shared a list of local companies, where fellows can apply for internships. Andrey also shared the sources, which can be used in learning data analytics in more detail.

Senior **Shaislam Shabiev** “We were able to hear inspiring stories directly from successful alumni themselves. It was important that they gave very detailed answers and advice based on their own experience. It was a great pleasure to be reunited with Alumni and know that that they are always willing to help with advice!”

Fellows were grateful for the information and tips provided by the speakers. We hope that the session motivated attendees to start learning new coding languages during their summer breaks.”



ANDREY LESKIN

## ALUMNI UPDATES

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Nursultan Abdukhalilov**, AUCA'16, Founder of Nur Agro Trading. The company sells tractors, forklifts, and other machinery that is imported primarily from Japan. More recently, Nursultan has also become involved in commercial real estate and construction through the sale of cranes, and leasing venues.

## NEW JOBS

**Anara Myrzaeva**, AUCA'11, IT Administrator, Kumtor Gold Company, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Aidai Almaz kyzy**, AUCA'15, Financial Assistant (remote), Honorlock, Honolulu, Hawaii

**Gulnaz Bedelbaeva**, AUCA'11, Analyst, Microfinanza Rating, Moscow, Russia

**Nursultan Irisov**, KIMEP'17, Audit Associate at Deloitte LLP, Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Chyngyz Begimkulov**, AUCA'18, Audit Assistant, Deloitte & Touche, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Nigora Burhonova**, KIMEP'19, Audit Assistant, Crowe – ACG, Khujand, Tajikistan

**Firuza Hasanova**, KIMEP'16, Technical Recruiter, AWS, Amazon through Insight Global, Seattle, Washington. "I am also trying to get my CAPM (Certified Associate of Project Management). I am starting my classes this week and will need to get ready for the actual exam. This certification will help me greatly to get into a project management role, which is something I'd like to do in the long run," shared Firuza.

**Arystan Moldabekov**, KIMEP'11, Director of Finance / Chief Accountant, KIDF Management Company Ltd., Astana, Kazakhstan

**Anisa Atalova**, AUCA'16, Financial Manager, Change Fitness, Bishkek

**Zhamilia Klycheva**, AUCA'17, Research Assistant, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California

**Zulfiya Urunova**, KIMEP'18, Implementation Manager, ReLog, Almaty, Kazakhstan

## PROMOTIONS

**Dinara Atantayeva**, KIMEP'13, Senior Manager, Economics and Development Department, Sovereign National Welfare Fund Samruk-Kazyna, Nursultan, Kazakhstan

**Yusup Artykgulyyev**, KIMEP'15, Senior Executive Assistant in the Office of the President, KIMEP, Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Rustam Bakibayev**, AUCA'14 Senior Analyst, Schneider Electric, Budapest, Hungary

**Madina Damir kyzy**, AUCA'14, Supervising Senior Auditor, KPMG Lowe Gulf LLC, Dubai, UAE

**Amantur Tynybekov**, AUCA'15, Brand Marketing Manager, Autodesk, Dubai, UAE

**Mohinav Amonulloeva**, KIMEP'17, Reporting Finance Analyst, Coca-Cola Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

**Daniyar Abdiev**, AUCA'19, Advanced Analytics Consultant, Lovelytics, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (remote employment)

# ALUMNI UPDATES

CONTINUED



**28** new graduates join the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association, bringing the total number of program alumni to **286**

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