

# NEWSLETTER

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CELEBRATING  
**OLGA PYKHOVA**  
AUCA VALEDICTORIAN 2020  
4<sup>th</sup> U.S.-CAEF FELLOW  
TO EARN THIS HONOR

**2020 STEVEN F. SHEA  
AWARDS FOR ALUMNI**  
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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, economics, 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  
AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN-AMERICAN ENTERPRISE FUND, WHICH HAVE MADE ITS OPERATION POSSIBLE.**



# U.S.-CAEF VIRTUAL GRADUATION: 10<sup>TH</sup> COHORT



**28**  
FELLOWS

**13**  
KIMEP  
UNIVERSITY

**15**  
AUCA



**46%**  
GRADUATED  
WITH HONORS



UNUSUAL BUT UNFORGETTABLE

# GRADUATING DURING COVID-19

Graduations are always special, but there is nothing more magical than a U.S.-CAEF graduation. Unfortunately, the global pandemic changed all plans and the program's traditional in-person celebrations were canceled. Nevertheless, the U.S.-CAEF community found a way to honor the seniors and make their graduation unique and timeless.

# U.S.-CAEF VIRTUAL GRADUATION: 10TH COHORT

CONTINUED

While most universities around the world postponed or outright canceled their graduation ceremonies due to COVID concerns, U.S.-CAEF moved its graduation events online. Fellows, alumni and staff worked together to create special videos which were shown during the virtual graduation events in Almaty and Bishkek on May 23 and May 30, respectively. The videos featured the achievements of graduating seniors; congratulations from the U.S.-CAEF Board, American Councils, university partners, alumni, and current fellows; and announcements about the recipients of the Steven F. Shea Excellence Awards for seniors and alumni. Although the events were held on a virtual platform, to everyone’s pleasant surprise, they turned out to be exciting and meaningful. After the presentation of the videos, the audience stayed in the virtual rooms to socialize as everyone wanted to spend more time together. Fellows commented that the videos united everyone and created a festive and cheerful atmosphere, which replicated the true feeling of traditional U.S.-CAEF graduation events.

*“..U.S.-CAEF taught me to think critically and be self-assured. My last semester I spent with pain in my heart realizing that these four years have passed quickly. However, there is a bright future ahead and I have my U.S.-CAEF family, the family who always believes in me.”*

— Olga Pykhova

				
<b>GAVKHARKHON MAMADZHANOVA</b> SUMMA CUM LAUDE	<b>AIZHARKYN KUDAIBERGENOVA</b> SUMMA CUM LAUDE	<b>OLGA PYKHOVA</b> SUMMA CUM LAUDE	<b>SULTAN MOLUTOV</b> SUMMA CUM LAUDE	<b>FARZONA KHAIDAROVA</b> SUMMA CUM LAUDE
				
<b>MALIKABONU ORIFJANOVA</b> CUM LAUDE	<b>NAZIRAKHON KHOLTURAEVA</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE	<b>SUHAILO MAMADNIYOZOVA</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE	<b>MEERIM ZHANYBEK KYZY</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE	<b>ZHANNA MARCHENKO</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE
				
<b>UULZHAN AITNAZAROVA</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE	<b>MEYLIS RAHMANOV</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE	<b>ATOBEK RAKHIMSHOEV</b> MAGNA CUM LAUDE		

*“Seniors couldn’t hold their excitement. Their emotions were priceless, and they admitted that it felt like a real graduation event. As always, the day was full of fantastic performances from younger fellows. Although they were pre-recorded and shown on the screen, they still made a great impact and stirred great emotions. In addition, all fellows wrote special letters to the graduates who were their mentors, which the seniors found very touching,”*

— **Uranbek Turdumbaev**  
U.S.-CAEF PROGRAM SPECIALIST



AUCA GRADUATES



**Olga was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**

## STEVEN F. SHEA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2020: GRADUATING SENIORS

During the virtual graduation events, organizers announced the recipients of the Steven F. Shea Excellence Award for graduating Fellows. This award was established by the Foundation in May 2015 to commemorate Mr. Steven F. Shea, a founding director and the first president of U.S.-CAEF. The award is presented annually to the most outstanding graduating Fellows in recognition of their significant academic and professional achievements, service to the community, and active commitment to the economic growth of Central Asia.

### AUCA WINNERS



### SEVARA TADZHIBAEVA

Described by a former colleague as a “formidable force of nature,” Sevara was exceptionally active during her years at AUCA. Namely, she took part in internships with such respected institutions as Deloitte, KPMG, the Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyz Republic, the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, and Beyond Investment Group. Sevara’s extensive experience in both the private and public sectors have prepared her well for a career beyond AUCA. Outside of her professional endeavors, Sevara was also a SILC Scholarship recipient and spent one academic year at the University of Hong Kong. She also served as President of the AUCA Case Club, elected member of the AUCA Senate, and Project Manager of the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Program. Sevara also received 2nd place in the Beeline Case Competition in 2017. **Sevara was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**



### SEZIM ZHENISHBEKOVA

Sezim is regarded as a natural leader who consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to her field. During her time at AUCA, she took on multiple roles in student life, serving as President of the U.S.-CAEF Student Association, Vice Chair of the AUCA Student Senate, and President of AUCA Case Club. Sezim is also the co-creator of a FLEX alumni grant project, “TechMothers,” which provided technology training to 35 women in rural Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, Sezim earned an AUCA Exchange Semester Award to study at HAN University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Sezim also took part in several internships during her tenure, including one at the State Agency of Antimonopoly Regulation in Bishkek. In recognition of her outstanding achievements, **Sezim was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**

## STEVEN F. SHEA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2020: GRADUATING SENIORS

CONTINUED

## KIMEP UNIVERSITY WINNERS

## NAZIRAKHON KHOLTURAEVA

Nazira earned a spot on the President's List every semester from fall 2016 to spring 2019 at KIMEP, a result of her near-perfect cumulative GPA. Her commendable academic performance also earned her an Ernst Mach Scholarship, through which she spent an exchange semester at FH Krems University in Austria. Nazira's accomplishments earned her spots at the 45th Business Today Conference in New York City founded by Steve Forbes, and the OSCE Central Asia Youth Network Conference. She also won the P&G CEO Challenge in Moscow, Russia, and served as VP of Finance with the U.S.-CAEF Student Association, and co-organized the first joint U.S.-CAEF Case Cup with the KIMEP Case Club. Nazira supplemented her KIMEP activities with internships at KPMG and JYSK Dushanbe. **Nazira was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**



## GAVKHARKHON MAMADZHANOVA

Gavkharkhon holds the highest GPA of all senior U.S.CAEF fellows at KIMEP, with an outstanding 4.30 out of 4.33. Her academic prowess earned her spots on the university's President's List in the fall and spring semesters in both 2016 and 2017. As another result of her academic success, Gavkharkhon earned an Ernst Mach Scholarship to study abroad the University of Applied Sciences, Upper Austria, and an Erasmus+ Scholarship to study at Uppsala University, Sweden. Outside academics, Gavkharkhon served as President of the KIMEP Case Club and Head of the organizing committee for the 2018 Mars-KIMEP Business Case Competition. She also held a role as Ambassador of Germany for the 15th KIMEP International Research Conference. Gavkharkhon held internships in the Microcredit Deposit Organizations of IMON International, Tajikistan and FINCA Tajikistan. **Gavkharkhon was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**



U.S.-CAEF SPIRIT TEAM ANNOUNCES

VIRTUAL  
Talent Show

Aug 7th-Aug 25th: share your talents on our Facebook event page and help us rally U.S.-CAEF spirit! Voting will begin on Aug 25th and the final show, top 10 countdown, will happen on Aug 28th.

## STEVEN F. SHEA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2020: GRADUATING SENIORS

CONTINUED

## HONORABLE MENTION



**UULZHAN  
AITNAZAROVA**

**AUCA**

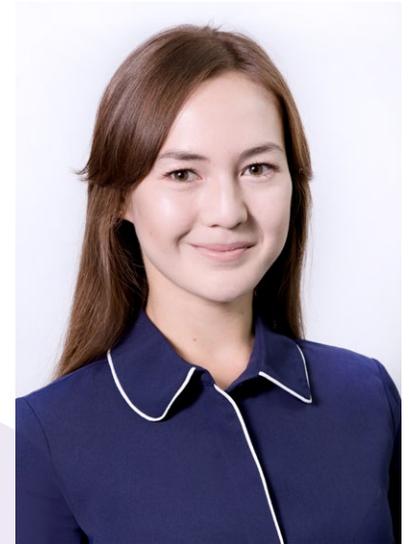
Uulzhan excelled academically during her time at AUCA, earning a spot on the President's List and Dean's List on multiple occasions. Outside of her studies, she served as the Co-Founder of the AUCA Accounting Club, the President of the Student Council of the New Generation Academy (NGA), and the organizer of the first nation-wide accounting competition in Kyrgyzstan. Uulzhan also took advantage of international networking and skill-building opportunities by participating in the Study of U.S. Institute (SUSI) Women's Leadership Program in Seattle, USA and the GetEngaged Youth Leadership conference in Budapest, Hungary. In addition, she further honed her professional development by completing internships with Gazprom Kyrgyzstan (through the U.S.-CAEF Regional Internship Program) and Bank of Asia CJSC. **Uulzhan was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**



**FARZONA  
KHAIDAROVA**

**AUCA**

Driven by a desire to create a better financial environment in Central Asia, Farzona served the AUCA community as a Marketing Manager for the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Program, Marketing Manager for the AUCA Case Club, co-organizer of the Bishkek Case Cup 2019, leader of the organizing committee for the Artificial Intelligence Hackathon, and the Chief Financial Deputy for the Water Security Symposium at AUCA. On top of all this, Farzona earned a perfect 4.0 GPA during her studies, and is the only U.S.-CAEF fellow in her cohort to have earned this achievement. In preparation for her career goals, Farzona worked as Marketing Manager for Unity Fund, an intern for the Audit and Marketing departments at BDO Tajikistan, and currently, she is Head of Project Management at Neobis. **Farzona was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**



**BAYAN  
BEKBAS**

**KIMEP UNIVERSITY**

Passionate about finance and developing Kazakhstan's capital market, Bayan majored in Corporate Finance at KIMEP and is on track to graduate Cum Laude. As a result of her strong academic performance, Bayan earned a spot on KIMEP's President's List and Dean's List on several occasions. To further her professional development, Bayan held internships with Coca Cola Almaty and Volkovgeology, JSC, and served as a Teaching Assistant for the Bang College of Business at KIMEP. Through these experiences, she earned the respect of her colleagues, who commend her "can-do" attitude, unwavering positivity, leadership potential, and communication skills. Within the KIMEP community, Bayan participated in the KIMEP Accounting and Finance Club (KAFC), the Leadership Development Program, and the Almaty Invest Forum in 2016. **Bayan was selected to take part in the U.S.-based Capstone Internship Program in fall 2020.**

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Despite the many challenges surrounding COVID-19, U.S.-CAEF fellows have taken advantage of numerous opportunities to further their professional development. In doing so, the fellows have demonstrated remarkable adaptability in the face of uncertainty, and unwavering determination that is nothing short of inspiring. As a result of their perseverance, the fellows have put themselves at a competitive advantage and will be uniquely prepared to face the job and internship market once businesses begin to return to their regular operations.

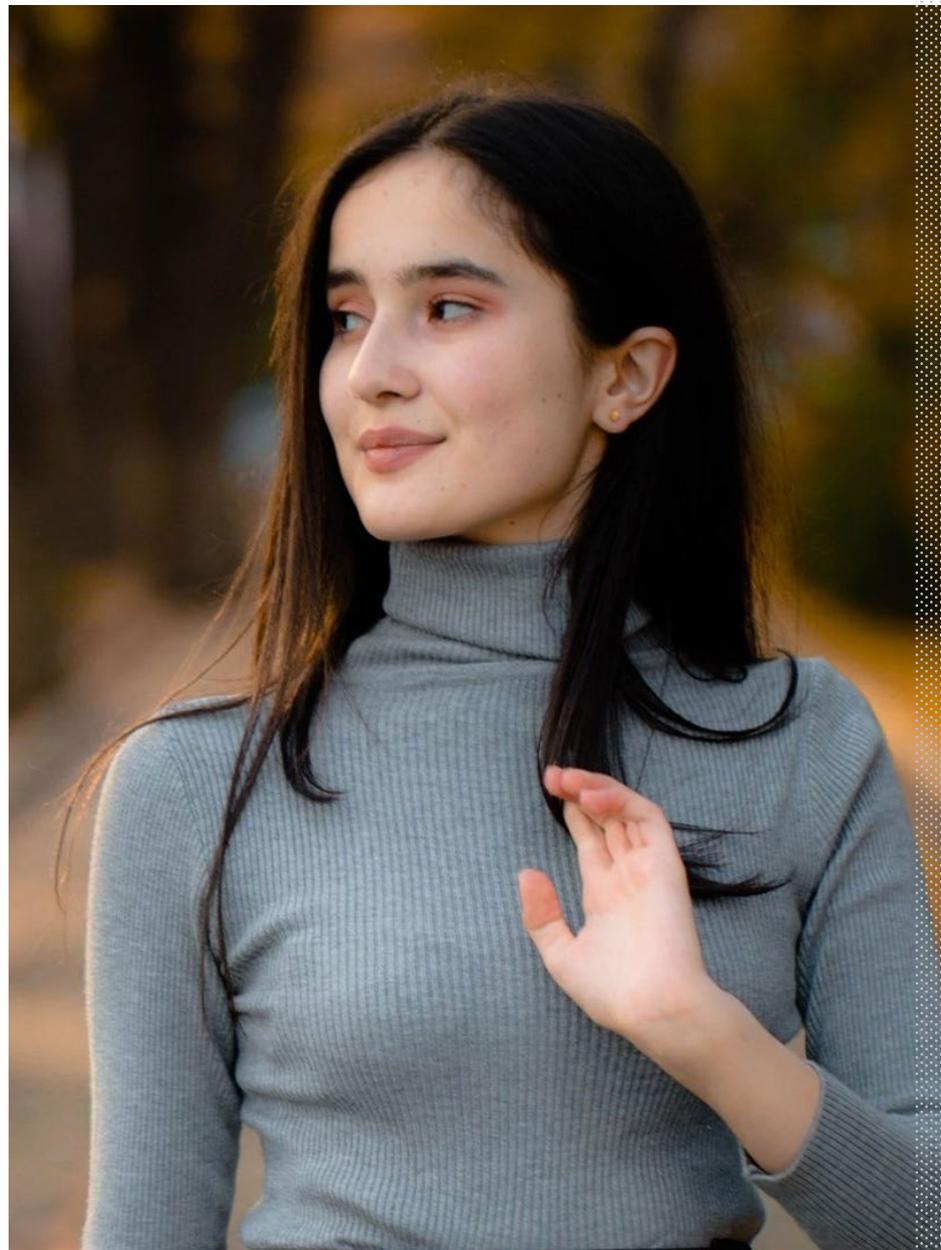


### PROJECT MANAGEMENT & SMM SKILLS

**FARANGIS MIRZOBEKOVA, TAJIKISTAN 2019**

Due to the current situation in the world, my summer plans have changed and after the spring semester, I found myself with lots of free time, which I felt I should use effectively. That is why I decided to find an internship and discover new skills and gain more experience.

Since May 2020, I have been interning with EASYSCIENCEKG, which creates science courses for school children. I help with creating new online preparation courses. I find it useful and very interesting since I am learning how to do market research, use my networking skills, and become responsible. Furthermore, this internship gave me a chance to meet new people. I found a mentor, who will be teaching me social media marketing skills.



## CAREER DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

CONTINUED

# PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

ALMAT ORAKBAY, KAZAKHSTAN 2018

I want to share my experience that helped me discover my passion for the area of my professional interest—finance. The Online Internship Program provided by the Bureau for Continuing Professional Development (BCPD) of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) encouraged me to follow my passion.

The program lasted for roughly two months, from May 4 to July 9, 2020 and consisted of three stages. In the first stage, we studied the Investment Foundations Program provided by Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute. At the end of May, only **75 participants out of 306 passed a test on Investment Foundations.**

Then in June, we started the most exciting part of the internship. **We took part in preparation lectures for CFA level 1 and Financial Risk Manager (FRM) level 1 exams.** At the same time, we took part in a group project: constructing an investment portfolio. Our group managed to take 3rd place in the investment portfolio competition! The experience helped me grasp the fundamentals of equity research, and portfolio management. Additionally, I sharpened my teamwork, leadership, and other soft skills, thanks to my teammates.



**3<sup>RD</sup> PLACE**  
**INVESTMENT  
PORTFOLIO  
COMPETITION**

 **BCPD**

## Certificate

This is to certify that  
**Team "Aura"**  
**Adelina Damir, Almat Orakbay, Ulykbek Khamit  
Arman Nurlanov, Aytuar Darbayev**  
has won honorary 3rd place in investment portfolio  
competition within the framework of  
**"BCPD for University Students: Inspiring Leadership"**  
**Online Internship Programme**  
at AIFC Bureau for Continuing Professional  
Development  
June 1 – July 9, 2020  
Nur-Sultan Kazakhstan

  
Assiya Karibay  
CEO

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

CONTINUED

## REAL WORK EXPERIENCE AT NEOBIS

Neobis is a student organization that provides opportunities for students to practice their computer skills by working on real projects. Gaining acceptance to this popular club is quite competitive. Two U.S.-CAEF fellows were accepted to the club and shared their experiences.



*“Of the 15 applicants, only six were chosen to intern at Neobis, including myself. During the first two weeks of the internship, we learned about leading a team, writing commercial proposals, creating terms of reference, and planning sprints (tasks). We were told that the intern completing training with the highest score would work under the supervision of U.S.-CAEF graduating senior **Farzona Khaidarova**, Head of Project Management.*

*I tried my best to win the competition, and my efforts paid off. Currently, I work with **Farzona** and **Yiman Altynbek uulu**, both U.S.-CAEF fellows, on developing a mobile app for online medical consultations with Prime Clinic. I have been involved in writing terms of reference, and discussions about the final product and adding additional features. I prepared mockups for patients, administrators, and doctors, which helped the product owner to better understand and visualize what we are proposing. Our product owner liked my sketches and even said that it was the first time he had seen such a professional attitude toward the work. The experience motivated me to grow and gain more experience, as I see that I have the potential and desire to work in this sphere.”*

— **Nurzada Abdivalieva**  
KYRGYZSTAN 2017



*“On May 10, my team successfully defended our final project at Neobis. It is a test prep app for university entrance exams that required back-end and front-end development skills. In the summer, I decided not to relax much and instead start to work on a new project, an Android app called Prime Doc, for a medical center in Bishkek. It is the most complicated and challenging project I have worked on so far. In short, my freshman year was interesting, action-packed, fulfilling, and satisfactory in many ways. Now, I look forward to starting my sophomore year.”*

— **Yiman Altynbek uulu**  
KYRGYZSTAN 2019

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

CONTINUED



### THE **GOLDEN** TICKET

**UMAR NASRIDDINOV, TAJIKISTAN 2017**

As a third-year student, I had a strong desire to find a job that would be related to my major. One day, I heard that Ticketon, the biggest ticketing company in Kazakhstan, was looking for an assistant to the financial director. To my surprise, after the interview, they hired me for a part-time job. After working as an assistant for two months, the company offered me a new position as a data analyst. This was a new position in the company at that time, and for me, it was my “golden ticket.” It was my first full-time job. Being new to this field, I had to learn many things while working. As an analyst, I was working with our database, I had to analyze the market and forecast sales, propose new strategies, and resolve problems. While doing all of this, I learned a lot about online advertising. In a month, I learned how to launch different kinds of advertisements on Google and Yandex. After my colleague quit, there was no one but me in the company who knew how to launch advertisement campaigns on Google. As a result, for some time, I was both a Data Analyst and a Contextual Advertisement Specialist, the areas I had not been familiar with before coming to the company. While working at Ticketon, I gained valuable experience, knowledge, and confidence.

### MY SUMMER INTERNSHIP WITH TOPTELL GROUP

**KARINA TADJIEVA, UZBEKSITAN 2016**

This summer, I had the opportunity to work at Toptell Group as an intern. The main business activity of the Toptell Group is e-commerce. Fortunately, I was given a chance to choose the department where I would like to work based on my interests. Therefore, I decided to work in the Digital Marketing Department. Working with Toptell Group was a challenging and exciting experience that taught me how to make important decisions and take responsibility. Thanks to this summer internship, I have learned a lot about different aspects of my future profession including market analysis, campaign planning, social media management, content writing, and business development. During this period, I met a lot of interesting people and made new contacts that could be helpful in my future career. Moreover, I learned a lot about myself thanks to the daily feedback I received from my supervisor and other employees. It was an honor to be part of this corporate environment and contribute to the organization’s growth.

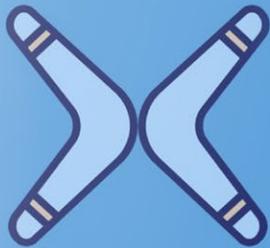


## CAREER DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

CONTINUED

# BOOSTING CREATIVITY THROUGH IT

SEZIM KANATOVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2018

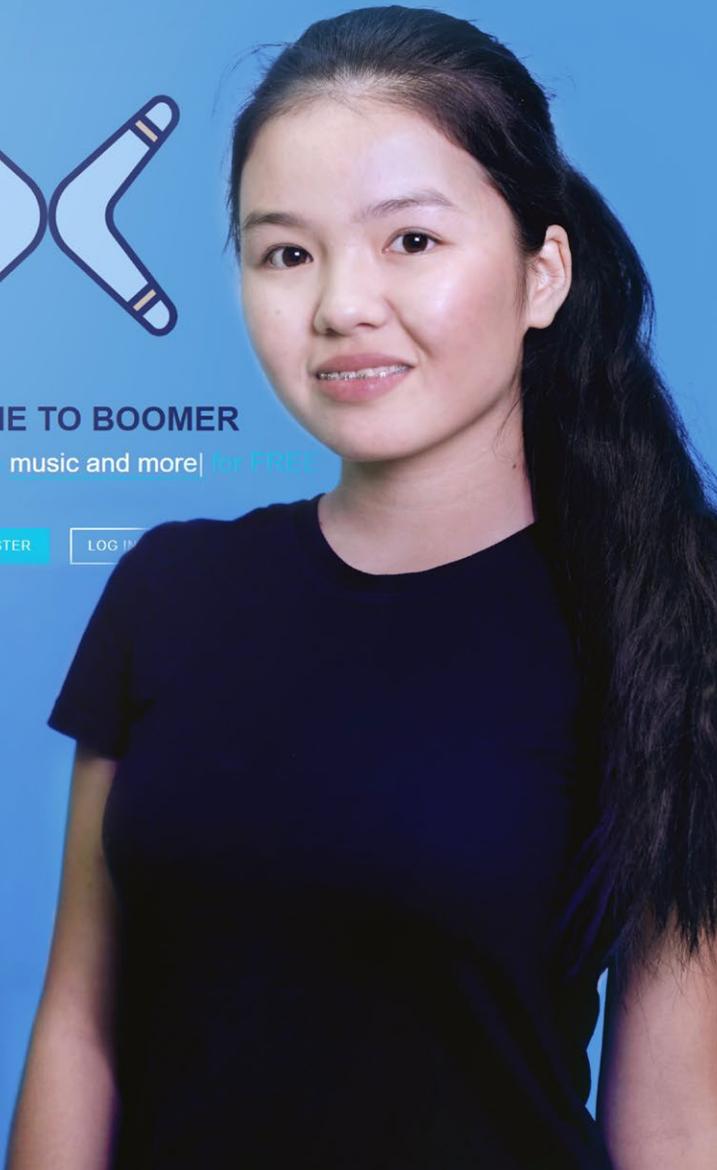


## WELCOME TO BOOMER

Everyone can learn music and more| for FREE

REGISTER

LOG IN



In September 2019, I enrolled in the Java programming language course at IT Academy. Throughout the 9 months of the course, we covered a lot of material from basic algorithms to Spring MVC frameworks. Now, I am working on my defense project called “Boomer.” It is a web application that provides a platform for free skill exchange among its users. From my personal experience, I know how hard it is to realize that despite your endless passion to learn something, you are unable to do so due to financial barriers when you are a teen. That’s why I was motivated to carry out my project that will provide opportunities in terms of courses, conferences, or webinars. “Life is truly a boomerang. What you give, you get” became my motto. Based on this boomerang principle, the end-users will first have to obtain some points by teaching others (providing similar services). Once they have enough points, they can exchange the points for the course they wanted to get enrolled.

By working on my current project, I learned not only to do the back-end coding where you just write functions but also to understand end-users’ perspectives by putting yourself in users’ shoes. It helped me boost my project’s efficiency and design structure. Also, connecting front- and back-end coding was another big issue, but those problems challenged me to expand my knowledge and motivated me to become a full-stack programmer. After graduating from my courses, I want to proceed with IT by joining start-up companies.

## MAXIMIZING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES DURING QUARANTINE

With every crisis come challenges, but also many opportunities. U.S.-CAEF fellows have worked hard to seek out virtual educational opportunities during the pandemic, which have sharpened their skills and knowledge during a time of great uncertainty. Fellows' commitment to furthering their academic skillsets is commendable, and the following stories detail some of their experiences.



### QUARANTINE HAS ITS BENEFITS. . .

**GAVKHARKHON MAMADZHANOVA,**  
TAJIKISTAN 2016

During the pandemic, all of us were asked to stay at home and avoid gatherings. For most of us, it was really hard to do that as we were used to active social lives. I found it useful to take several online courses for self-development. Some of those that I participated in were Bloomberg Market Concepts, Getting Started on the Terminal, and Portfolio Management. The courses were provided free of charge for a limited number of KIMEP students. The course is very useful for finance students as their job is closely related to data analytics, and Bloomberg Terminal is where you get these data. Students with any educational background can pass these courses as the concepts are explained in detail and are simplified. I also participated in another online course called The Fundamentals of Digital Marketing from Google Digital Garage. The course was recommended by our alumnus, **Alisher Murtazaev**, on his LinkedIn page.



### BLOOMBERG EDUCATION

**ALUA CHYNTEMIROVA,** KAZAKHSTAN 2018

The period of the pandemic has led to many important decisions and educational growth in my life. During the quarantine, I was able to get access to online course from Bloomberg, a major global provider of financial news. KIMEP University shared a limited amount of Bloomberg accounts for free, which I instantly took advantage of without hesitation. Bloomberg Market Concepts and Portfolio Management courses were delivered interestingly, and completing them was a crucial step in determining my future career direction. Now, I am interested in financial investment. It gave me a vision of what to learn next and how to develop myself to become a professional.



### CMA SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

**DILNAZ IMERAMZAYEVA,** KAZAKHSTAN 2017

I am delighted to say that I was awarded a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) Scholarship. This year, only four students from KIMEP University were given this scholarship. The CMA Scholarship allows recipients to obtain the CMA certification at no cost and provides all the necessary study materials to take the exams. Moreover, the CMA certification provides the required knowledge and skills for future accounting and finance professionals. I am very proud and happy to be a recipient of the CMA Scholarship and will do my best to receive the certification.

## MAXIMIZING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES DURING QUARANTINE

CONTINUED



IMRAN ALIMOV, TAJIKISTAN 2018

**REAL ESTATE & RISK MANAGEMENT ONLINE COURSE**

I took part in an online course called Real Estate and Risk Management, organized by Cushman & Wakefield, a global commercial real estate services firm, and the Bureau for Continuing Professional Development. The course lasted for three days with 3- to 4-hour long lectures each. Each day we learned about different topics: Development of Commercial Estate, Commercial Estate Today, Market Capital, and Risks in the Real Estate Industry. Although these topics are not directly connected with my major, I believe it is really important to have a wide range of knowledge from different spheres. I found these courses very interesting since I learned not only basic information about the industry but also discovered how developers and specialists in the real estate industry evaluate risks and what analysis they perform before making decisions.

**TOP TEACHER AT ONLINE SCHOOL**

For more than five months already, I have been teaching at an online English language school called SkyEng. Currently, I have 10 students aged 9 to 16 with whom I conduct face-to-face lessons for 2-4 hours per week. I find it interesting since I learn how to find common ground with different students, learn to motivate them, and try to make each lesson useful and interesting. Although this is just my hobby, I work hard to be a good teacher, and last month, I became one of the 50 best teachers from among 1,000 teachers employed by the school. For me, this is a great achievement, since the result was based on the feedback from students and retention.

**Top 50/1,000 best teachers!!!**

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## MAXIMIZING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES DURING QUARANTINE

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CONTINUED



### WHAT I LEARNED DURING QUARANTINE

**AISULUU RYSPAeva**, KYRGYZSTAN 2019

Student life can be very busy and overwhelming, as we often focus on academics and forget about hobbies and art. Fortunately, the quarantine allowed me to devote some time to drawing and graphics and opened a whole world of illustration to me. Using my drawings, I prepared a short animation about how to defeat the coronavirus pandemic. Combining all drawings and making smooth transitions was the most difficult part of the project. With a simple plotline, the video had a deep meaning: with a smile and love, we can overcome all obstacles. I tried to show people that even in such uncertain times we must support and love each other no matter what.

Later on, I submitted this cartoon to an online contest held at AUCA. Out of 150 contestants, I was selected as the winner of the competition, becoming a local 'celebrity' among my relatives and friends. The cartoon can be found on the AUCA SPIRIT YouTube channel.



### MY SUMMER AMBITIONS

**DINA MAMADJANOVA**, UZBEKISTAN 2019

Thanks to U.S.-CAEF, our 2019 freshmen are taking part in the AUCA summer school program, which allows them to engage in interesting discussions on human rights and English word formation during our online classes as well as additional classes at the international dormitory.

During summer school, I became curious about one of the topics- International Humanitarian Law. So, I applied for the online course offered by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Disaster Preparedness and Response Institute (HKJCDPRI) and successfully passed 2 midterm examinations with practical research assignments. Now I have a strong desire to continue my studies in this field to gain more knowledge about the protection of human rights during armed conflicts.

## STUDY ABROAD

Prior to the rapid escalation of the pandemic, several U.S.-CAEF fellows embarked on study abroad semesters in various locations across continents. Each year, fellows broaden their horizons and expand their cultural awareness by living and studying abroad to supplement their coursework at their respective universities. Despite most students having to return to their home countries before the culmination of the spring semester in 2020, our fellows capitalized on these unique experiences and made longlasting memories.

### **DILRABO SAIDALIEVA** UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW, SCOTLAND

I started my exchange semester with Erasmus+ Incoming Credit Mobility on January 12. I took mainly Honors classes and found out that the UK education system encourages a lot of self-study and reading outside of the classroom. Besides academic life, I was highly involved in many university organizations that are similar to KIMEP student organizations, such as GU South Asian Society, GU Kazakh Association, GU International Society, and Erasmus Student Network.

Glasgow University is one of the most diverse universities in the world, so I was able to meet students of many different nationalities, both in and outside my classes. I got to hear about the post-university ambitions and plans of the students, which gave me a new perspective to compare with the KIMEP University students. In addition, Scotland has beautiful nature and terrain, which I was able to enjoy partially. I would love to return to Scotland and the UK again after everything has settled down in the world.



## STUDY ABROAD

CONTINUED

**BIBIGUL ARZYBAEVA****BARD COLLEGE, NEW YORK, USA**

Though this was not my first time being in New York State, it was my first experience actually studying at a university in the USA. I was able to experience it through the Program in International Education at Bard College, where I spent my spring 2020 semester. Even though my actual physical presence at Bard lasted only two months due to the worldwide pandemic, the learning process lasted until May 19 with the help of remote classes.

In my two months at Bard College, I was able to meet and make new friends from all over the world. Our coordinators at Bard College made us feel comfortable by showing the American culture through different events such as visiting historical places around Annandale-on-Hudson and guiding us in the Bard Campus, which has a lot of history as well.

However, the best thing that happened to me this semester was the classes that I took at Bard and the professors I met. I enjoyed learning Sociology with professor Klein, Matlab with professor Sethi, Corporate Finance with professor Ussher, and Senior Research with professor Smith. Every class was indeed a great experience. I can definitely say that I learned a lot of things, most of which I am going to apply in my senior project, my future profession, and further studying. Thus, I would like to thank everyone with the help of whom I was able to have this terrific experience at Bard, including my professors in both universities, exchange and U.S.-CAEF coordinators, and all the students who became my friends during such a short but wonderful time.



## STUDY ABROAD

CONTINUED

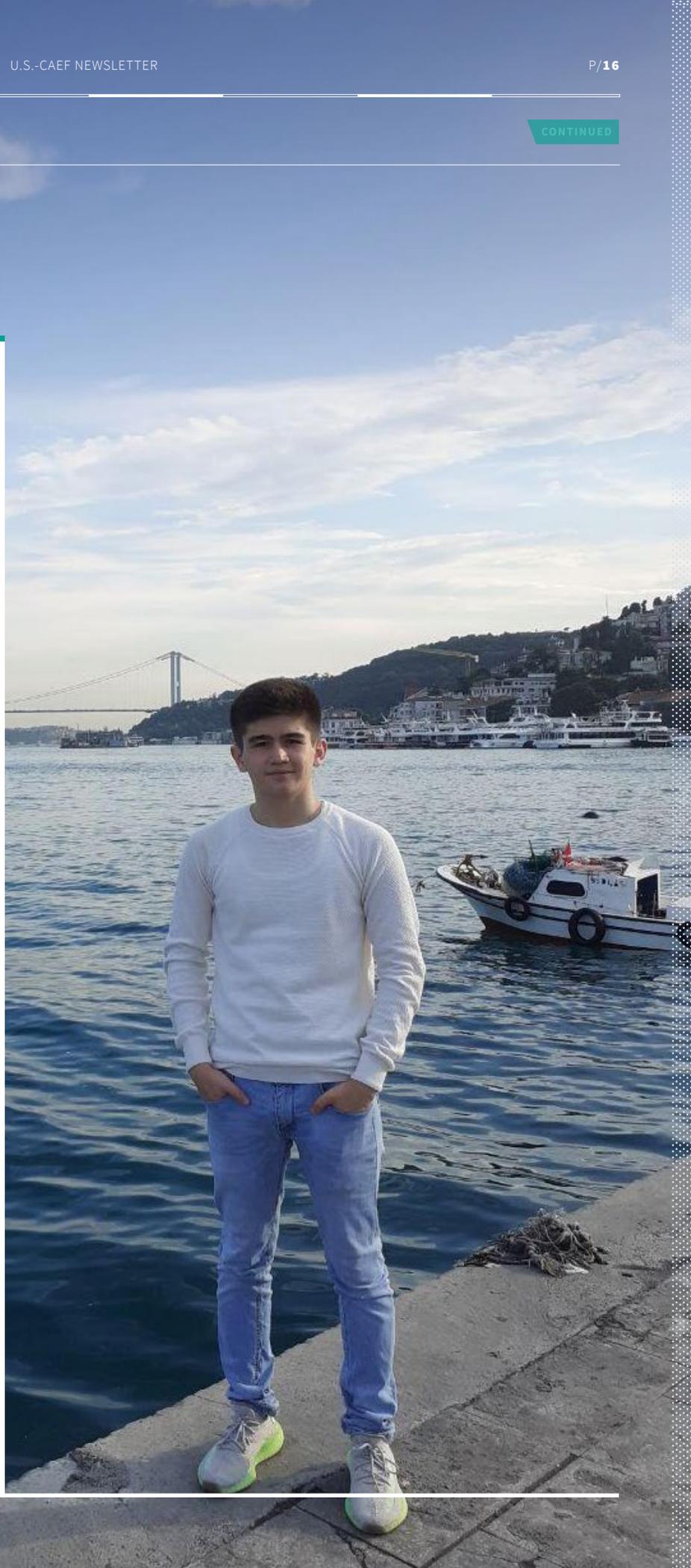
## ABDUVOKIDKHUJA QODIROV

### BEYKENT UNIVERSITY IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, my exchange semester became one of the most incredible experiences of my life. To begin with, the university offers a practice-based curriculum, a rich campus life with cybersports clubs to different forms of art. The business culture of Turkey is very appealing to me with its emotional marketing techniques and employer-employee relationships.

Unfortunately, on March 11, quarantine measures were enforced and classes and exams moved to online platforms. Therefore, I did not spend much time on campus, but when the restrictions were lifted, I explored the city, indulged in Turkish culture, and met people from all over the world and made some close friends along the way. The city mesmerizes me with its beautiful sights, such as the Bosphorus canal, castles of sultans, enormous mosques encrusted with precious stones, and other historical places. Some of the places became very special, such as Floria Beach, Aya Sofia, Blue Mosque, and Bebek Sahil.

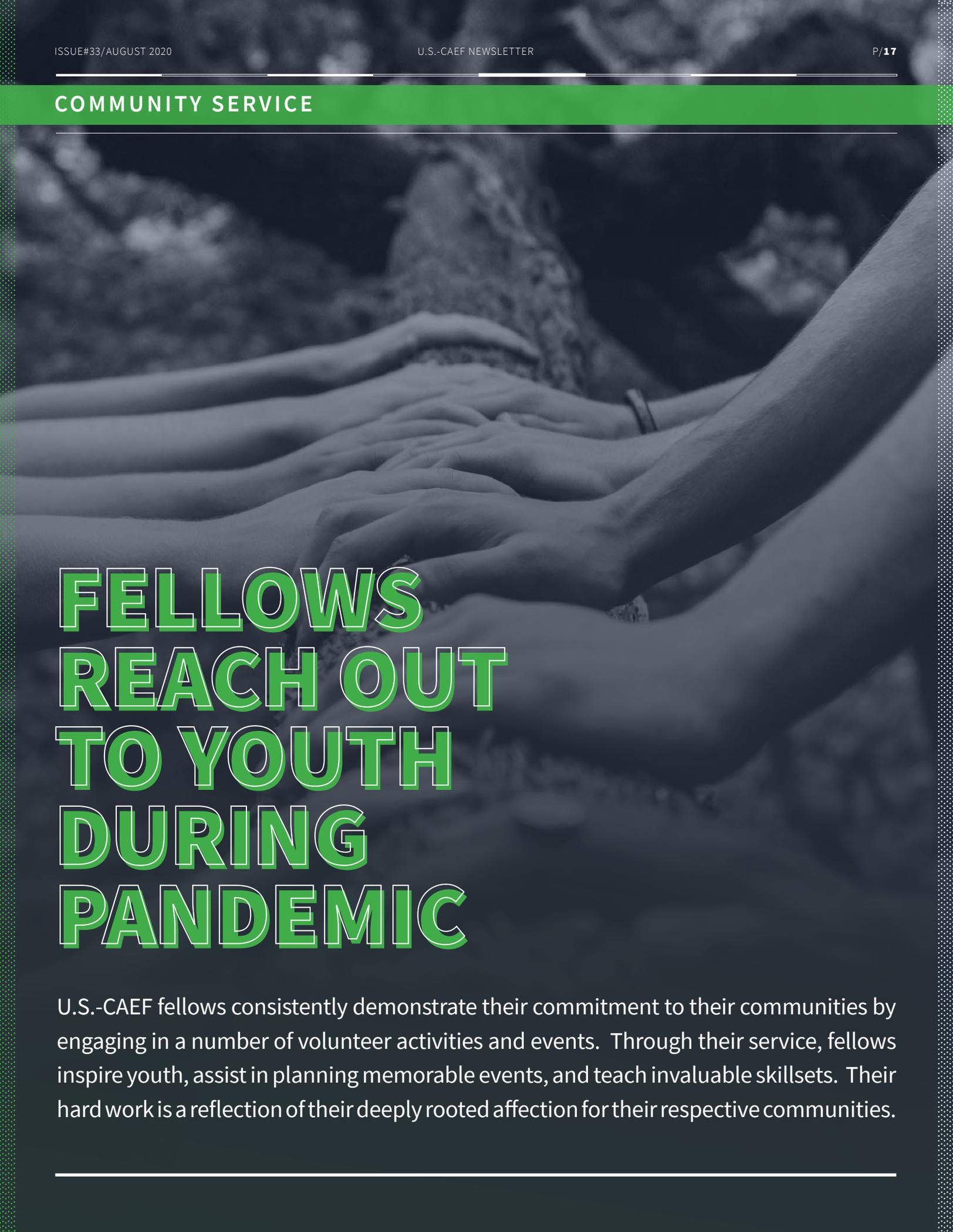
Overall, these experiences were very impactful and led to great personal growth. I have learned to be more certain in a time of uncertainty. Online classes and sitting at home for two months taught me how to be resilient and adaptable to rapid changes. I noticed how some businesses were able to adapt to the current conditions, but others couldn't, and therefore, have closed.



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## COMMUNITY SERVICE

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# FELLOWS REACH OUT TO YOUTH DURING PANDEMIC

U.S.-CAEF fellows consistently demonstrate their commitment to their communities by engaging in a number of volunteer activities and events. Through their service, fellows inspire youth, assist in planning memorable events, and teach invaluable skillsets. Their hard work is a reflection of their deeply rooted affection for their respective communities.

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## COMMUNITY SERVICE

CONTINUED



## REACHING OUT TO KYRGYZ AND VIETNAMESE YOUTH DURING QUARANTINE

NURMUKHAMAD TURKBAEV  
KYRGYZSTAN 2018

In March, I launched a series of workshops for youth in Kyrgyzstan. Initially, I was the only speaker and gradually I started inviting my friends from AUCA to join me and participate in the workshops as guest speakers. As a result, nine active students from AUCA shared their experience of applying to local and foreign universities, learning languages, studying abroad, and the advantages of studying at AUCA with U.S.-CAEF and NGA scholarships. As a result, I was able to attract more than 700 students to my webinars, and 4 of them were able to receive a full scholarship to study at AUCA's New Generation Academy (NGA).

In addition, I decided to expand this initiative and was able to launch my first webinar for freshmen and sophomores of Vietnamese universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The topic was "Advantages of Being a Civically Engaged Person." I shared tips on attracting youth to civic projects, fundraising and applying for grants, as well as motivated the students to run long-term projects, rather than one-time, short-term projects.

## LEADING THROUGH SOCIAL PROJECTS WITH YSEP

AIANA RYSBEKOVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2018, PRESIDENT OF YSEP

On June 14-27, the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Program (YSEP), a charitable organization created and run by U.S.-CAEF fellows, **conducted an online social project called "Speak Up" for 50 high school students selected from among 300 applicants.**

The project's purpose was to strengthen students' skills in public speaking, arguing in the context of a debate, critical thinking, and advocating for their thoughts and ideas. We had a guest speaker, Shamil Kubulbekov, who is one of the best debate trainers in Kyrgyzstan. The next speaker was **Altynai Nuralieva**, our U.S.-CAEF fellow and YSEP team member. She taught students to create great presentations using different programs and software tools like PowerPoint, Canva, and Prezi for different kinds of speeches.

The students enjoyed the presentations and were motivated to work on assignments. They were asked to prepare an argumentative presentation on one of the social problems in Kyrgyzstan, offer realistic solutions and prepare a presentation about it using the tools that they had learned. Our team gathered the presentations through Google Classroom. For most of the participants, this online platform was new. Many of them shared it with their teachers in their regions. The problems and solutions ranged from IT education in Kyrgyzstan, digitalization, bride kidnapping, poverty, and other issues.

During the final round, all participants pitched their ideas offering solutions to the problems that they had selected. Aktan Toktosunov, a 9th grader from Karakol, won the competition. He offered well thought-out ideas about recycling based on his research and analysis.

We hope this project will be a perfect start for these 50 students in their personal self-development. As for us organizers, we have improved our leadership and communication skills. We even used some elements of agile project management. Thus, the project was helpful not only for our participants but for each of us.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

CONTINUED



## ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS' NEEDS

SARFAROZ YUNUSOV, TAJIKISTAN 2019

I have been living in the AUCA dormitory for 8 months. It has been exciting to live in a multicultural atmosphere as it helps me learn more about different cultures, make international friends, and improve my language skills. In the beginning of the academic year, I co-organized the Young Life club, the purpose of which is to create and maintain a friendly, fun, family-like, and comfortable atmosphere in the AUCA dormitory. To achieve the goals of our club, we organized different social activities like board games, competitions, karaoke, storytelling, online games, movie nights, dinners, etc. Because of these activities, we became closer and had a chance to rest from our studies. As an organizer, I had a chance to develop my management, public speaking, and communication skills. Because of my active participation in the dormitory events and my role as one of the organizers of the club, I was selected as a Resident Assistant beginning in June 2020, to help our managers during these difficult times. In my new role as an RA, next academic year, I want to help other students also to have positive life experiences at the AUCA dorm.

## FAREWELL MESSAGES FROM U.S.-CAEF NEWSLETTER TEAM MEMBERS

**Alumni Uulzhan Aitanzarova and Meerim Zhanibek kyzy** recently completed their service as interviewers for the U.S.-CAEF newsletter team, for which they spoke with numerous alumni and shared many important stories. During their time working for the newsletter team, Uulzhan and Meerim contributed tremendously to the newsletters' success. They have shared letters to express their gratitude for the skills and inspiration they gained from their work in the passages below. We are equally impressed and appreciative of their hard work! Furthermore, the newsletter team would like to welcome the fellows' successors, rising junior and sophomore (respectively) Aigul Sapparova and Aisuluu Ryspaeva.



**Uulzhan:** In our sophomore year, Meerim and I joined the U.S.-CAEF Newsletter team, of which I am very proud. Looking back on the past three years with the Newsletter team, I have realized that I gained several significant things from this experience. Firstly, my childhood dream came true. When I was in secondary school, I dreamed about owning my own journal and being an editor-in-chief. Working for the newsletter, I gained lots of experience in interviewing, transcribing, and editing the articles. Secondly, I am happy that I had a chance to connect with our bright, talented, always-inspiring alumni and learn about their experiences firsthand. Meerim and I were inspired by the alumni's achievements and we wanted to convey them to the fullest in our interviews. I want to say thank you to Meerim, who was the perfect teammate and partner. Thank you for your beautiful smile and the joyful time that we had during our work!

**Meerim:** It was such an honor to join the U.S.-CAEF newsletter team along with Uulzhan in 2017. For me, being a member of the newsletter team meant building a bridge between our amazing U.S.-CAEF alumni and fellows and sharing their truly inspiring stories. I enjoyed being part of the important work of the newsletter team by working on every interview and article for upcoming issues and by seeing the light in our fellows' eyes after reading the articles full of success stories and advice from alumni. I remember how nervous I was during my first interview with Chynara Erkulova (a U.S.-CAEF KIMEP alumna 2016), as I was meeting my role model of many years whom I also knew from U.S.-CAEF newsletters. Moreover, throughout our journey from sophomore to senior year, we gained not only interviewing and editing skills, but also learned to be more proactive, for which we are so grateful to the newsletter team. One of the most important things I learned was that every article we worked on mattered so much, because one young person might be one step closer to success by gaining inspiration from our work. To sum up, I would like to express my gratitude to the newsletter team for always supporting and motivating us in this extraordinary journey. And, of course, this all would not have been possible without my great teammate Uulzhan, who is professional, passionate, and fun to work with. I will surely miss this experience!

**AIGUL AND AISULUU, OUR TEAM WISHES YOU BEST OF LUCK AND A PRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCE AHEAD!**

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



## FAREWELL TO THE OUTGOING ALUMNI COUNCIL & WELCOMING NEW PRESIDENTS

As we make the transition to the fifth Alumni Council (Council), the U.S.-CAEF team would like to express our sincerest gratitude to our outgoing officers of the fourth Council. Led by Presidents **Zhibek Kamalbek kyzy** of AUCA and **Zulfiya Urunova** of KIMEP, the Council's activities have brought a new sense of unity to our family over the last year and a half. Their legacy will be their efforts towards bringing our AUCA and KIMEP communities closer together! Events such as the Black-Tie brought alumni from Central Asia together, and in doing so strengthened the ties that bind us all together. We want to thank the officers, their strategic advisers, and their teams of interns! The contributions each of you made have positively impacted our community and we are grateful for it.

OFFICERS	STRATEGIC ADVISERS	FELLOW INTERNS
Zhibek Kamalbek kyzy	Moldir Kussainova	Aigul Saparova
Zulfiya Urunova	Karina Kussainova	Aiana Rysbekova
Guliza Almazbek kyzy		Sezim Kanatbakova
Amina Iqbolzoda		Nurmukhamad Turkbaev
Anisa Hojjeva		Alua Chyntemirova
Bahtiyar Jalilov		Imran Alimov
Azatbek Ismailov		Zevar Mamadjonova Aruyel
Jahongir Rahimov		Nurbekova
		Abduvohidkhuja Qodirov



*“Interning with the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association was a unique experience that helped me get closer to our U.S.-CAEF family. Before this experience, I had barely known our alumni. As a Social Media Marketing (SMM) intern, I worked on the alumni Instagram posts. Primarily, our goal for this term was to boost networking between fellows and alumni, so I created posts about the achievements of some alumni. Whenever I reached out to the alumni, I felt proud of every alum and became motivated to gain professional experience abroad and come back to develop our country’s education and IT spheres. Besides this, I was lucky to have my alumni mentors (Zhibek, Guliza, and Azatbek) and peers (Nurmukhamad, Aigul, and Aiana) by my side as they were helping me during the challenging yet exciting times.”*

— **Sezim Kanatova**

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to our newest Alumni Association presidents: **Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy** and **Irina Abasova**! The U.S.-CAEF team looks forward to working with you and to all that you will accomplish as Alumni Association Presidents!



### IRINA ABASOVA

PRESIDENT OF KIMEP UNIVERSITY CHAPTER

I am originally from Turkmenistan and I graduated from KIMEP in 2012. I am cofounder and co-owner of two manufacturing Create3D companies in Almaty. As a KIMEP student, I was President of AIESEC, an international student organization, where I was responsible for creating strategies for sustainable growth of the organization and managed the Executive Board. After graduation from KIMEP University, I worked in the analytics department of Kaspi Bank. In 2016, I was awarded the Steven F. Shea Excellence Award. I am also a 2006 FLEX alumna. As president of the Alumni Association's KIMEP Chapter, I plan to make alumni events more informal. I think that we need to use to the fullest such a great benefit as the U.S.-CAEF network of talented and active people. We can build friendships, projects, and businesses together. If I did not believe in the power of networking among U.S.-CAEF alumni, I would not spend my time on applying for the position of the President of the Alumni Association.

### AIZHAN KERIMBEK KYZY

PRESIDENT OF AUCA CHAPTER

I graduated from American University of Central Asia in 2019. Currently, I am a Project Manager at the public fund "Tonus." During my studies at AUCA, I did my best to make the most of all the opportunities presented to me: internship programs, exchange programs (IESEG School of Management, 2017), volunteering programs (AUCA, UNICEF), U.S.-CAEF and AUCA training sessions, etc. I was President of Youth Social Entrepreneurship Project (YSEP) where together with other U.S.-CAEF we organized educational and charitable projects for children. After graduation, I worked in the marketing department of "Qausar", an advertising agency. I believe in the power of networking. I believe in the power of self-awareness. Therefore, as President of the Alumni Association, AUCA Chapter, I plan to organize more events that will become a meeting platform for all U.S.-CAEF alumni and fellows. Mentorship programs— fellow-alumni and fresh graduate - alumni—are one of biggest goals for the term of my presidency since I've realized the effectiveness of mentoring through my own experiences as a mentee and mentor.

*When I was applying to the U.S.-CAEF Program, I told myself, "I will definitely give all the knowledge and experience I receive back to society." I believe being President of the Alumni Association is one of the greatest ways to do so and express my gratitude to U.S.-CAEF for all the greatest opportunities it continues to present to us."*

— AIZHAN KERIMBEK KYZY

## 2020 STEVEN F. SHEA AWARDS FOR ALUMNI

A total of six U.S.-CAEF Alumni, three from AUCA and three from KIMEP University, were honored this year with the Steven F. Shea Excellence Award for their significant professional achievements, service to the community, and active commitment to the economic development of Central Asia. From among the Alumni, one individual from AUCA and one from KIMEP University were selected to receive the top honor of \$1,000 and a plaque of recognition. In addition, four honorable mention candidates, three from each university, were also selected to receive a certificate of recognition and a monetary grant of U.S. \$250.

### WINNERS

#### TALGAT KADIROV

##### KIMEP UNIVERSITY

Originally from Uzbekistan, Talgat began his professional career with an US-based internship as a member of the first cohort for the U.S.-CAEF Capstone Internship Program. Since then, he has built his career at Ernst & Young in Kazakhstan, working his way from a member of the assurance staff in Astana to a Senior Audit Manager in Almaty. He recently assumed a new role as Chief Financial Officer at Republican Central Headquarters of Professional Militarized Emergency Services, LLP, an organization with 13 branches and over 3,000 employees. On top of this, Talgat recently founded a startup that has partnered with American engineers from the Colorado School of Mines to develop an imaging system that detects oil sites for drilling. Most recently, Talgat won a Fulbright scholarship to pursue his MBA at Tulane University, Louisiana.



#### KALYS ZHUMAKADYR

##### AUCA

Since graduating from AUCA in 2014, Kalys has been employed with multiple companies, including Beeline, where he served as an Innovation Products Development Specialist and was later promoted to Innovation Products Development Manager, and VEON, where he was Head of Digital Products, Digital Hub Eurasia. He also held positions at Trans-Kyrgyz Gas Pipeline and Advanced Investments. Kalys is the Co-founder and CEO of unisport.kg, a company that provides single subscription service to gyms, pools, and other recreational facilities throughout Central Asia. Due to the current situation with the pandemic, Kalys had to put his business on hold. Currently, he is a Scrum Master at BTS Digital in Kazakhstan. In addition to his professional success, Kalys has been instrumental in the development of Business Breakfast Meetings, which were initiated as a way for U.S.-CAEF fellows and alumni to network with local industry leaders.



## 2020 STEVEN F. SHEA AWARDS FOR ALUMNI

CONTINUED

## HONORABLE MENTION


**ANISA  
ATALOVA**
**AUCA**

Anisa has demonstrated a fierce entrepreneurial spirit through her professional accomplishments and participation in U.S.-CAEF Alumni events. She has started two businesses since graduating from AUCA in 2016: Let's Makeup, a cosmetics store with locations in both Bishkek and Osh that is going on three years of successful operation, and a newer venture called Change, a fitness club. Prior to this, she took part in the Capstone Internship Program in Washington, DC, interning with US Small Business Administration. Additionally, Anisa has continued to be one of the most active members of the alumni community, having previously served as President of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association. She is widely regarded as a source of motivation for her peers and the embodiment of the U.S.-CAEF spirit.


**GULNAZA  
KHALMANBETOVA**
**AUCA**

Gulnaza, AUCA '17, began her professional career as a Program Assistant at American Councils' Bishkek office working with the U.S.-CAEF Program. She has since been promoted to Program Coordinator and works with the USG Small Alumni Grants Program, and is particularly involved in the "Young Inventors" Program. Outside this role, Gulnaza is respected for her social initiatives and efforts to promote entrepreneurship among mothers in Kyrgyzstan. A new mother herself, she organized a conference last summer for expecting mothers in Bishkek and Osh, which provided detailed information about pregnancy, delivery, family planning, and women's reproductive systems. Over 450 women attended the conference, which featured several specialists and free private consultations. Together with partners, Gulnaza also initiated projects called "She Talks" and "She Starts," aimed at creating opportunities for entrepreneurial-minded women.


**RUSTAMJON  
VAKHOBOV**
**KIMEP UNIVERSITY**

Upon graduating from KIMEP in 2015, Rustamjon has held positions as an Audit Assistant at Deloitte, a Financial Analyst at Qazaq Air, and, most recently, a Senior Financial Auditor at Prime Capital Holding. While working full time, he also co-founded Silk Bridges LLP, a company that provides management consulting and commodity brokering. The company's main goal is to create a modern version of ancient Silk Road trade routes within the global economy by creating a bridge between the east and west. The company was recently involved in a \$500,000 investment deal for a mining company; Silk Bridges will be the broker for the mine's products and will take charge on the development of the legal, finance, sales, and logistics of the company.


**GUFROJON  
AYUBJONOV**
**KIMEP UNIVERSITY**

Gufrojon began his professional career as a Marketing Specialist with SAROB in Tajikistan, and later transitioned into the role of Sales Specialist with the same company. Most recently, he took on the position of National Water Resources Management Project Coordinator with an NGO called Helvetas Tajikistan, and has also served as a consultant for the World Bank. In his consulting role, he trains farmers and entrepreneurs on how to write business plans and how to apply for grants. In keeping with his support of the farming industry in Tajikistan, Gufrojon has also formed the startup "АгроТичорат" ("Agribusiness"), which provides ploughing, cultivating, spraying, and sells agricultural products.

## ALUMNI STORIES

# FROM BUSINESS PRO TO IT SPECIALIST

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# INTERVIEW WITH SADDAM BAIALIEV

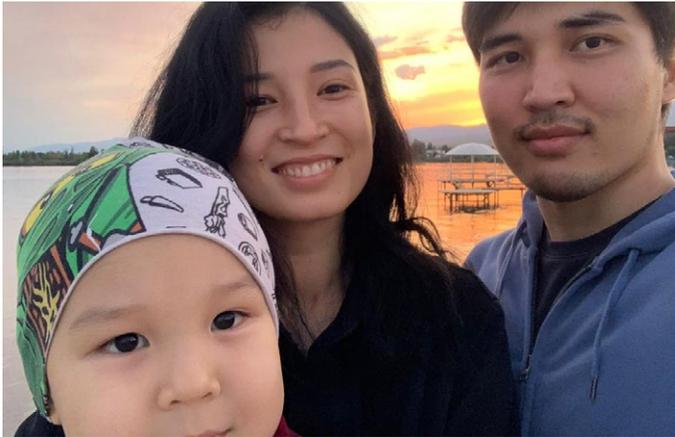
BY AIGUL SAPAROVA & AISULU RYSPAeva

Saddam Baialiev is a U.S.-CAEF alumnus who graduated in 2011 with a degree in Business Administration from AUCA. After serving as CEO of three companies, he changed his career path by entering the world of Information Technology. As an IT specialist today, Saddam has developed multiple websites and mobile apps for companies located in Canada, USA, and Switzerland, including Heartbeat AI Technologies Inc, Yurtah.com, and FLYERBEE AG. He has also mentored youth learning programming in Bishkek. He is now a Senior React Native Developer at MaxyLogic. Despite being one of our busiest alumni he was very happy to be interviewed.



## ALUMNI STORIES

CONTINUED



**Q: What was the impetus for transitioning to the world of IT after graduating with a degree in Business Administration?**

When I graduated from the university in 2011, I decided to go deeper into various business projects utilizing my degree. Together with my brother in 2013 we started a company that focused on transporting textile cargo from Kyrgyzstan to Russia, LLC Zamat Cargo. I was also engaged in the development of digital products, UMAI Payment Systems, and even tried to conduct online trainings. All this was so new and incomprehensible that in the end I did not get the desired results and was left with nothing. I still managed to make a small profit from UMAI Payment Systems, but it did not meet my expectations, so I sold the company to a local bank and began looking for new opportunities. For the next two years, I was looking for what I would like to do and concluded that the best option for me was programming. It took about six months to learn, and then I applied for an internship at the Attractor School in Bishkek. This month was enough for me

to master new information to further receive an invitation to work in Attractor Software and become a mentor in the same school. Then everything aligned and I found work at another company.

**Q: Do you work exclusively as a programmer or do you still pursue your private business interests?**

As a programmer, I mostly provide technical services, for example, writing code. However, I do have one plan for implementing a new product I am developing, in part because I would like to found my own business again. Perhaps soon I will be able to devote more time to my plan and launch the product, but, as for now, it remains as a goal.

**Q: Many of our fellows are interested in learning software engineering. How did you begin studying IT since you did not study this at AUCA?**

It all depends on what you like and what you want to learn. The world of programming is very diverse and extensive, but everything is interconnected. Where there is a programmer,

there must be a web designer, and for a finished product you need a person who can attract traffic. Every project needs managers that can coordinate the various threads, so that everything develops in sync. Based on this, I think that you need to find your niche within the sphere of IT as opposed to trying to do everything, otherwise nothing will work. Try to get an understanding of the many specialties within the industry and find what catches your eye. Then learn more about it to see if it is something you want to pursue.

**Q: Do you have any successfully launched projects that you are particularly proud of doing?**

There is Yurtah.com that was founded by my friend Timur Mone. I developed the whole front end of his website which was a great responsibility. Yurtah.com is a website for finding real estate to buy or rent in New York City. I worked there for eight months, creating the whole website from the ground up.

**Q: How would you like to change what you do within the IT sphere?**

Ideally, I would become a CEO by founding a company with a good purpose. First, I want to develop a useful new product from scratch. I would then pitch my startup to investors and begin launching my company by finding good programmers and building up my team.

**Q: It has been many years since your graduation, what advice would you give our current**

**U.S.-CAEF fellows for finding success in their careers?**

Twelve years ago, I did not have any idea as to what I would be doing in the future, meanwhile many of my peers knew exactly what they wanted to do from the very first day of freshmen year. The funny thing is I was very much into music. I used to write my own songs and I even opened a studio in 2011. It was quite a while after graduation when I realized I needed to quit music and get into another business around 2013 or 2014.

And it is okay if you are learning IT, business, or economics and you feel like it is not where you belong. It is okay if you know that you will likely change your profession later in your career, the skills you are learning will likely benefit you wherever your career takes you. Change might happen at any time and you should not be afraid of it. And the earlier you take an initiative to learn what you like, the better off you will be.

If there is an opportunity to do technical tasks, you should take it. For instance, I find it easier to perform technical tasks such as developing software products through coding. However, in the past I would ignore my strengths and I chose to work in businesses which required mostly soft skills and did not utilize my hard skills. If you can develop your hard skills, do not hesitate to do so because it is fundamental for any professional. Hard skills do not come easily and require practice and effort; therefore, I advise you to pay attention to that.

## ALUMNI STORIES

CONTINUED

## NOMNOM: HOME-MADE FOOD DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

**Nigora Burhonova** and **Nilufar Umarova**, both KIMEP'19 graduates, were featured in the May edition of the U.S.-CAEF where they shared about their experience at a boot camp held at the Upshift Lab in Dushanbe, a project funded by UNICEF. Since then, the alumni have created their own project.



Their project idea was thoughtful enough that UNICEF and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) agreed to provide seed money for \$1000.00. Thus, NomNom was born! Using that money Nilufar and Nigora have already been able to develop a website with the assistance of a mentor, they hired a delivery person briefly before establishing a relationship with a local delivery start-up, and they have been able to gain some local support by reaching out to regional influencers who agreed to talk about their start-up via social media.

The concept of their project was easy to explain, they assumed that many women throughout Tajikistan, especially housewives, can cook. Taking this thought they wanted to leverage that skill so that women in Tajikistan could make an income without having to travel away from home. So, they formulated a system to deliver home-made food to customers. To implement their idea Nilufar and Nigora developed a platform through which they can take online orders from their customers.

*“U.S.-CAEF has granted me a chance to develop my soft skills as I became more confident in sharing my thoughts and ideas, working with different people and in different environments. Also, speaking of hard skills, the U.S.-CAEF regional as well as the Washington, DC-based Capstone internship programs helped me gain expertise, particularly, in digital marketing, and marketing in general. Forever grateful to U.S.-CAEF for all the opportunities I’ve had and will have!”*

—Nilufar Umarova

**To learn more about NomNom you can visit their website at [Nomnom.tj](http://Nomnom.tj)**

## ALUMNI UPDATES

### NEW JOBS

**Saddam Baialiev**, AUCA'11, Senior React Native Developer at MaxyLogic, Kyrgyzstan

**Cholpon Madylova**, AUCA'11, Finance Advisor, Shell Rhineland Refinery, Royal Dutsch Shell, Cologne, Germany

**Nazokat Alimova**, AUCA'14 Senior Accountant, AEG Vision, Dallas, TX, USA

**Ali Hamraev**, KIMEP'15, Financial Analyst, CFA Level III Candidate, Danone, New York City, USA

**Nasiba Nurmatova**, AUCA'15, Temporary Program Officer (Remote), Monitoring and Evaluation at the American Councils for International Education, Twin Cities, Minnesota, United States

**Surur Ulugbek**, KIMEP'15, Senior Auditor, PwC, Prague, Czech Republic

**Chynara Erkulova**, KIMEP'16, Project Manager, Appello Software (remote), Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Bakhrom Tursunov**, AUCA'17, Full-time Freelance Video Editor at Upwork, a global freelancing platform where businesses or individuals connect to conduct business, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Dastan Akhtayev**, KIMEP'18, Brand Manager, Marketing Department, Kimberly Clark, Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Mustafa Ziyatbekov**, KIMEP'19, Business Financial Support Analyst, Tengizchevroil, Atyrau, Kazakhstan

**Nigora Burhonova**, KIMEP'19, Human Resources Assistant, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Dushanbe, Tajikistan

**Maksud Rahimov**, KIMEP'20, Business Development Manager, Business Development Department, Evolet Healthcare Ltd., Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Paluan Rimov**, KIMEP'20, Associate, Transaction Advisory, PwC, Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Nazirakhon Kholturaeva**, KIMEP'20, Intern, Project Management, Procurement, Procter & Gamble, Moscow, Russia

**Indira Manjiyeva**, KIMEP'20, Junior Assistant, Audit Department, Deloitte (from Sept 1, 2020), Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Sezim Zhenishbekova**, AUCA'20, Product Manager, NambaFood, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

### PROMOTIONS

**Artyom Bakulin**, KIMEP'12, Senior Associate, Audit & Assurance, Deloitte Norway, Oslo, Norway; Pursuing Master in Accounting and Auditing at BI Norwegian Business school, Oslo, Norway, 2019 – 2021

**Rakhnaza Abakirova**, AUCA'17, Business Analyst, Ololo, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Farzona Khaidarova**, AUCA'20, Head of Project Management, Neobis, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

### POST-GRADUATE STUDIES

**Talgat Kadirov**, KIMEP'11, has received a Fulbright scholarship to pursue an MBA at University of Tulane, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States, 2020-2021

**Rakhnaza Abakirova**, AUCA'17, has been admitted to the Master of Arts in Economic Governance and Development Program 2020-2021 of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

**Tangulu Diushakhmatova**, AUCA'11, has received the Chevening Scholarship to pursue a Master of Public Policy program at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London, United Kingdom, 2020-2022

**Artyom Bakulin**, KIMEP'12, is currently pursuing Master in Accounting and Auditing at BI Norwegian Business school, Oslo, Norway, 2019 – 2021

### COMMUNITY

**Yuliya Baliyeva**, KIMEP'13, Founder and General Director of Euroconnection, has a network of five 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 in high-risk groups. Since April 27 they have already been able to provide around 500 free tests to members of the community. Her lab is also providing paid tests.

**Zhamilia Klycheva**, AUCA'17, organized a GoFundMe campaign to support medical workers in her native Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan who found themselves in a dire situation due to a rapidly growing COVID-19 cases. She was able to raise over \$14,000.

AUCA alumni **Kuttubek Rakhmanberdiev**, Altynai Melisova and current fellow **Islambek Ashyraliev** recently started another GoFundMe campaign to help healthcare workers battling COVID-19 in Talas, Kyrgyzstan.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Nursultan Aytbaev**, KIMEP'18, Assurance Department, Ernst & Young Tashkent. Currently he is in the process of preparing to take the ACCA exams to become an internationally recognized certified accountant, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

# THE U.S.-CAEF PROGRAM IS EXCITED TO WELCOME THE NEW COHORT OF 32 FELLOWS

THE FRESHMEN FELLOWS COME FROM  
FOUR COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA

**2** KAZAKHSTAN **10** TAJIKISTAN **14** KYRGYZSTAN **6** UZBEKISTAN

Although the school year has not started yet, the freshmen already feel the embrace of the U.S.-CAEF Family and are eager to contribute to the camaraderie and cohesion that have become defining characteristics of the program. The quotes below reflect freshmen's first impressions as U.S.-CAEF Fellows.



"In 2017, we had a tour at AUCA when I was an Access Microscholarship student. From that moment it was my dream to study at AUCA. But I knew that I couldn't afford it. Our guide at AUCA told us that she studies for free, gets a stipend and she really enjoys this program. From that moment, I started to learn more about this program. But I couldn't decide about my major. In 2018, during my FLEX year, I participated in different business clubs, took classes like Entrepreneurship and SMM, and I enjoyed solving business cases, and that is how I chose my department, Business Administration. Upon my return from the US, I started organizing social projects, and I want to continue doing that at AUCA, which is the best university for new ideas, new clubs and projects. On June 13, I receive a scholarship offer. I was the happiest person, all my family starting from my mom cried from happiness. Most importantly, my mom is proud of me. From June 13, I already feel support from our coordinators, Uranbek baike and Aikanysh eje, I already feel good teamwork, support from my new U.S.-CAEF Family. I like that we are like a big FAMILY, and sophomores and juniors will always help us with their advice."

—**BAKTYGUL TAZHAMATOVA**  
KYRGYZSTAN



"I am so happy that now I have many people from whom I can learn. It is important for me because in my village I didn't have a mentor or anyone to talk to about my future plans, except my parents. I knew that U.S.-CAEF has a special spirit and how people support each other. I started to feel this from the first days of being a finalist."

—**AIZANA ARSLANBEKOVA**  
KYRGYZSTAN



"Starting from the first day, we became close to each other and will become even closer while studying at AUCA. I believe U.S.-CAEF is something more than just a scholarship program. Unfortunately, we can't be together at AUCA from the start of our first year, however, we will try to make this period unforgettable. We all know that this program will give us a lot of chances to be the best students, so all we need is to use them properly. These years are going to be the best ones in our life."

—**AZIZA JOBIROVA**  
TAJIKISTAN



"U.S.-CAEF provides not only financial aid, but also helps us become better leaders. For me, U.S.-CAEF is more than just a scholarship program. It is such an impactful program which helps us reach our full potential in life, so we can become impactful members of our countries, region, and the world. I am thankful to the American people and the U.S. government for sponsoring this amazing program."

—**ANISJON BERDIEV**  
TAJIKISTAN



"Although the first semester is going to be online, which may be discouraging for many students, I want to assure all U.S.-CAEF freshmen, especially those who are not from Kyrgyzstan, to keep their chins up and not to lose their ambition because we're going to get through these times together and finally unite in the next semester. I'm extremely excited to get to know all of our fellows and am looking forward to meeting everyone in person."

—**SAMAR KANATOV**  
KYRGYZSTAN



"The U.S.-CAEF program has been a great achievement for me. I am now very happy to study with smart and talented young people selected from thousands of candidates. From our first correspondence with them, I learned that they can make the world a better place. In addition, I was pleased that the U.S.-CAEF program is a family. From day one, the program coordinators and students of this program, who are older than us, contacted us and gave us all the help and insights we needed. I thought it would be nice to thank everyone."

—**SHOHJAHON HAKIMOV**  
UZBEKISTAN



From the moment I found out I won this fellowship, I knew I was on the right path to joining the crew of talented and open-minded fellows, who have big aspirations and goals. Also, I have a feeling that the U.S.-CAEF mentorship and program support are huge, which will make me comfortable to share my thoughts, ideas and learn from others. I look forward to a brighter path and productive work with lots of learning at AUCA, and I am grateful to U.S.-CAEF for this phenomenal opportunity.

—**FARIZA DUSMATOVA**  
TAJIKISTAN

**WELCOME TO OUR  
U.S.CAEF FAMILY!!!**

# U.S.-CAEF SPIRIT MONTH

*Celebrate with us!*

We would like to celebrate August 2020 as our first U.S.-CAEF Spirit Month! Our new and returning Fellows are starting their academic year in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. During these challenging times, we invite our U.S.-CAEF community to unite via our social media platforms and share your best U.S.-CAEF photo and video moments, advice for our freshmen, announcements about opportunities and warm wishes to uplift our U.S.-CAEF family. U.S.-CAEF Spirit Month will conclude with Virtual Talent Show on August 28. We invite all Fellows and Alumni to participate. There is no better time to give back. Help us stay connected and support each other!

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