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.
Social distancing can lead to feelings of isolation. As people around the world are getting acclimated to studying and working remotely, it is becoming more important than ever to maintain the sense of connection and camaraderie, particularly for the U.S.-CAEF freshmen who started their academic careers during uncertain times. Several team bonding activities have been organized that created a fun virtual environment and boosted everyone’s well-being during these extraordinary times.

Keep spirits high, stay socially connected and support each other through social media! Use these clickable buttons to follow/like us on:
In the beginning of August, all fellows, and alumni, were invited to join the U.S.-CAEF Spirit Team. The goal of the initiative is to keep a sense of community alive despite social distancing by organizing various virtual interactive events, fun games, and challenges.

The first event organized by the U.S.-CAEF Spirit Team was the Virtual Talent Show! Eighteen fellows and alumni submitted their individual and team video presentations showcasing the participants’ talents, which included artwork, musical performances, singing, and even acrobatics. The volunteers put together an impressive final video featuring all submissions. The hosts, AUCA juniors Aiana Rysbekova and Nurmukhamad Turbaev, rallied alumni and fellows to participate in the challenge, provided all necessary support throughout every stage of the event, and greatly contributed to the success of the project.

Freshman Fariza Dusmatova of Tajikistan, who performed a song on guitar, won the challenge. Sophomores Bekjon Makhmudov and Dina Mamadjanova took second place for an acrobatic performance, and another sophomore, Aisuluu Ryspaeva, came in third for her animation drawing.
When the COVID-19 outbreak became a widespread threat in early 2020, many people lost their ability to go about their usual exercise routines. Gyms shut down, pools closed, and many local governments placed restrictions on use of public parks. Concerned about the effects these restrictions were causing people’s health, U.S.-CAEF staff member Dulat Yesnazar of the Almaty office together with active fellows and alumni arranged the first ever U.S.-CAEF marathon.
**KEEPING SPIRITS HIGH**

In total, eight teams of six participated in the race, with three males and three females on each team. Teams were separated by region, and represented runners from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, the UK, and the U.S. In addition to current U.S.-CAEF fellows, program alumni and program staff also took part in the event.

Designed to adhere to all World Health Organization guidelines, the race took place remotely. Over the course of one week — October 26 to November 2 — participants were instructed to use the fitness app Strava to record their time for a 7 km run, then submit their results to their team captain. Once all six team members completed their runs, their combined 42 km time was collected and compared to the other teams’ times. Team ‘Energizers’, which comprised Islambek Ashyraliev, Avina Abytaeva, Aiana Rysbekova, Altnai Nuralieva, Iman Altynbek uulu, and Boymatov Muhammad, all current U.S.-CAEF fellows, won the race with a time of 4 hours, 12 minutes, and 45 seconds.

Overall, the marathon was a tremendous success and proved an ideal way to build community and boost morale.

“The U.S.-CAEF marathon 2020 was not only about running somewhere separately and finishing fast. For me, it was about uniting despite any distance between U.S.-CAEF alumni and fellows. I thought I would [struggle] but the understanding that I am not alone was very helpful. This experience showed me the power of our community.”

- Aiana Rysbekova (AUCA ’22)

“While I was running, I thought how hard it is to run 42 km when it is not easy to run even7 km, but the sum of our team’s performance is 42 km. It is the same in life- together we can do better. I want to say if any U.S.-CAEF member needs help, I am always ready to run 7 km of their 42 km!”

- Islambek Ashyraliev
  captain of the winning team

“It was a challenging experience. I have not run that distance in a long time. Moreover, I have only been spending my time indoors for the last few months. This marathon was a great initiative not only as a bonding tool among our fellows and alumni, but as a new start for me. I learned that regardless of what’s happening in the world you can still go out, exercise, and have fun.”

- Farzona Khaidarova (AUCA ’19)

The first U.S.-CAEF marathon proved to be a wonderful success, and we are proud of all the organizers and participants for their commitment to personal wellness and community bonding during this difficult time. Despite participants taking part in the event in varied locations, we take great pride in knowing the U.S.-CAEF bond can transcend physical distance!
KEEPING SPIRITS HIGH

FRESCHMEN START ACADEMIC CAREERS AMIDST COVID-19

Amidst COVID-19, U.S.-CAEF welcomes a diverse cohort of 31 aspiring future leaders of Central Asia and hopes they will contribute to the camaraderie and cohesion that have become defining characteristics of the program. This is the second cohort of U.S.-CAEF fellows sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

In addition to virtual meetings organized by the American Councils staff, our continuing fellows, on their own initiative, held several sessions and activities for freshmen before and after the start of the school year which helped establish a strong sense of belonging and community among the new members of the U.S.-CAEF family, and transition smoothly to university life and new academic environment. The quotes below reflect freshmen’s first impressions as U.S.-CAEF Fellows at AUCA.

Orientation week began on August 17, and it was helpful for us freshmen to get familiarized with college life by exploring lots of new things. The orientation week gave me a chance to get a sense of the atmosphere of the university and its teaching style, which is sophisticated and based on a liberal arts curriculum. At first, taking classes that were not directly related to my major seemed strange to me. However, that is the primary goal of liberal arts colleges—to prepare students with wide-ranging knowledge not only specific to their specialization, but to many areas of professional life. Although classes are online now, AUCA is handling the situation well. I like that professors’ lessons are still interesting, and their attitudes toward students are very kind and supportive.

With the U.S.-CAEF Program, there are chances at every corner to take advantage of opportunities to participate in student life. From the start, the program has offered professional support and opportunities, like the mentorship program and extra classes, in which all of us are excited to participate. Plus, the coordinators are great at their jobs. For example, I think they selected the perfect mentor for me because we have similar interests. From the first day with my mentor, we got along well, and he is an experienced mentor with whom I am excited to work further. Being a U.S.-CAEF fellow is challenging, but it comes with many rewarding possibilities that can positively contribute to our futures.

From the very start, I knew that the U.S.-CAEF community I am part of will make my experience at AUCA remarkable. When I sign up for the courses at AUCA, I always check if there is anybody from U.S.-CAEF. U.S.-CAEF is like a big family for me where everybody is eager to help and support whenever I need it. For me, U.S.-CAEF is not simply a scholarship program, but it is like a boat of hope, where the people in it were chosen from the best ones, it is a boat of inspiration and stimuli for making a change. From the first day, I decided that if AUCA would be an ocean, then the U.S.-CAEF Community would be the greatest ship.

Oybek Turaev
Uzbekistan

Nekhotun Qirgizbekova
Tajikistan
It takes willpower to start a business at any age, but starting your first venture while you are still in school is particularly difficult as balancing schoolwork and the entrepreneurial dream are often troublesome for many students, but not for U.S.-CAEF fellows Kairat Tagaev and Aizana Arslanbekova. Their entrepreneurial spirit helps them dedicate their time and energy to their business ventures.

Frunze: Fashionable & Affordable

During the summer 2020, I launched my first business. Together with my business partner, Daniil Reush, we realized we always wanted to dress fashionably, but it was often difficult to find good quality clothes for decent prices. This desire motivated us to start our own clothing brand, Frunze (this name is a tribute to one of the greatest founders of Bishkek, Mikhail Frunze). The mission of Frunze is to grant young men an opportunity to dress well, but more importantly, to do so at affordable prices.

Our collection includes mostly casual clothing: coats, pants, shirts, and tracksuits. Our strategy was to develop one product at a time, build strong customer traffic for that one item and only then develop another product. So, at first, we offered tracksuits from the popular movie “The Gentlemen” and established wholesale distribution channels to Russia and Kazakhstan. Tracksuits that were made in Kyrgyzstan are now available in more than 25 cities of Post-Soviet countries.

Currently, we are working on establishing a new customer flow in Russia for our new collection of coats, pants and shirts. More importantly, Frunze showroom will open soon in the center of Bishkek, where everyone can come in and try on the clothing. This business experience was an extremely huge step in my professional development, which gave me real life lessons on how business works in Kyrgyzstan. I know there are still some areas in business that I need to learn more about, but I believe my continued education at AUCA will fill in these gaps.

Tyup Travels

During the summer, I decided to organize tours within the Issyk-Kul region and founded “Tyup Travels.” Our team of three successfully conducted three hikes for the residents of the Tyup district to one of the most popular places among local people: Kol-Tor lake. We continuously explored our surroundings to find new, interesting locations and developed new routes, including trips to Issyk-Kul. Despite the trips taking place during the quarantine, we managed to earn around $300 within 25 days. It was my first experience running a business and managing its finances. I enhanced my SMM skills, built wide networks, learned how to build and manage the brand, and learned how to attract more customers by adding new elements to the tours. For me, the experience was useful because as the founder, I played the role of a guide, HR manager, financier and SMM specialist.
INTERNSHIPS & CAREER ADVANCEMENT

GROWING DURING A CRISIS

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.

WORKING IN THE FREE ECONOMIC ZONE “KULOB”
BY DILRABO SAIDALIEVA, TAJIKISTAN, 2017

In August 2020, I began working at the Free Economic Zone “Kulob,” Tajikistan, as a specialist in the Department of International Relations and Investor Attraction. Given the uncertain times and the switch to online education, and keeping in mind U.S.-CAEF’s goal of preparing students for the development of Central Asia, I decided I should use my time to contribute to my community and expand my professional experience. FEZ “Kulob,” established March 1, 2019, is a separate territory within the Republic of Tajikistan with special customs and tax regimes. The purposes of establishing the organization were to promote sustainable socio-economic development of the region, create employment opportunities within the region and the country, and produce competitive export-oriented goods and products. Since I joined the team, I have mostly been in charge of preparing informative materials such as presentations, brochures, business cards, websites, etc. I also keep in contact with current and potential investors and make sure all the procedures of becoming a subject of the FEZ Kulob are as smooth as possible for them.

Though our territory is relatively small, my colleagues and I are trying to break out of this box and set international standards for our Free Economic Zone. In the two months that I have been working in FEZ “Kulob,” I have met with many people from various sectors, completed tasks assigned by corporate leaders, and learned the importance of productivity and efficiency. During the rest of my internship, I plan to use the skills I have gained at KIMEP University to attract, choose, and sustain investors and learn essential skills in differentiating profitable and sustainable business projects.
Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) plays a pivotal role in positioning itself as a global center for business and finance, connecting the economies of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Eurasian Economic Union, West China, Mongolia, Middle East and Europe.

In order to contribute to the AIFC’s competitive edge as a financial center over the longer term, the Bureau for Continuing Professional Development (BCPD) was developed in 2016. BCPD provides international professional certification preparatory courses and implements the best international practices to develop human capital and create a pool of local professionals with international recognition for the AIFC ecosystem and beyond. Since the start of the program, several U.S.-CAEF fellows have taken advantage of the professional development opportunities offered by BCPD programs. This year was no exception. KIMEP juniors Almat Orakbay and Alua Chyntemirova shared their feedback about the virtual internship programs that allowed them to dive into the world of finance.

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 BCPD 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.”

This summer I participated in the “Bureau for Continuing Professional Development for University Students: Inspiring Leadership” online internship program conducted by AIFC, which consisted of both theoretical and practical components. The program was related to investment fundamentals and learning to conduct analyses of financial securities. Having completed a previous course by Bloomberg, this course helped me to discover this sphere more deeply and raised my interest even more, providing me with valuable technical skills. The lessons were conducted almost every day for around two hours over the course of a month, and they were filled with information necessary to take a CFA test. Overall, the experience was challenging but exciting.”

Alua Chyntemirova

Almat Orakbay
In Spring 2019, I joined the Enactus KIMEP student organization and after half a year I became president of the organization! Beginning in September 2019, my team and I did our best to create sustainable and useful projects. However, as a group of 12 students, we struggled a lot, because as it turned out, making a valuable and profitable business without sponsorship and mentors is not a simple task. Fortunately, Beeline Kazakhstan soon announced a competition to fund promising digital projects. Thus, our Enactus team began to think about possible startup ideas. After some initial brainstorming, I unexpectedly received a message from the KIMEP Center of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) offering to collaborate for the Beeline competition. We agreed, then came up with the idea of selling unused, soon-to-expire food from restaurants and supermarkets. Furthermore, we would make a database of products gathered from the large supermarkets and small grocery stores. We named the project “Good Food.”

After creating a well-developed application to put our idea into action, in August 2020 we finally submitted our project to the Beeline Kazakhstan digital contest. We won 1st place! In addition, we received 1,000,000 tenge to further develop our project. About 60 projects entered the competition, 11 of which made it to the final round. I am delighted that our diligence, tenacious and creative minds, and relentless determination allowed us to achieve our goal!
EXPLORING CAREER OPTIONS WITH KPMG

Many fellows interested in pursuing a career in finance or consultancy, consider a career with one of the Big 4 companies. The Big 4 are the four largest accounting firms in the world: PwC, Deloitte, E&Y and KPMG. While they offer many of the same accounting and auditing services, each firm is different. To explore the corporate culture, qualification requirements and employment prospects with KPMG Kazakhstan, KIMEP senior Dilnaz Imeramzayeva and AUCA junior Aiana Rysbekova took part in the company’s traineeship and summer school programs, respectively. The passages below describe the fellows’ thoughts about their experiences.

This summer, I had the opportunity to serve as a Trainee with the Corporate Finance and Deal Advisory departments at KPMG Tax and Advisory LLC. Although it was challenging in the beginning, it was a great experience. Moreover, I was always supported and led by senior colleagues, and I learned a lot from them. My university knowledge combined with my eagerness and strong technical skills, helped me perform my duties at a high level. My duties included composing valuation proposals, conducting research, and translating report slides.

The major task throughout my internship was developing of an infographic report based on the data supplied by a client in the sphere of cattle and meat production. The task involved creating various graphics and translations of texts, building figures in proper tables, and designing a presentation according to KPMG standards. I was glad that by the end of the internship, my efforts paid off and I received positive feedback from my managers and colleagues. The experience helped me realize my passion for the finance field."

Dilnaz Imeramzayeva

In June 2020, I had the chance to be part of a summer school organized by KPMG Kazakhstan. It was held online for 15 days with various webinars and activities for 100 students from Central Asia. This experience was very valuable for me to understand what kind of work is done by one of the top accounting organizations in the world. Each day was a journey through different departments, learning the real challenges faced by the company. In addition to the professional knowledge, I was able to learn what types of employees are in demand nowadays by having sessions with the HR Department of KPMG. This experience undoubtedly helped me to understand my career path better and plan my life after I graduate. Upon completion of the summer school, I had a chance to apply to become an ambassador of KPMG at AUCA during the new academic year. Now, I can share my acquired knowledge about a career at KPMG with AUCA students, with the assistance of KPMG staff. We have planned several events that will be held during the fall semester to help students get ready for their future careers. I will also be helping with the recruitment of new employees from Bishkek. I am very excited to be starting this position. Even after the initial meetings, I have gained new insights in developing my organizational skills by working with HR supervisors at KPMG.”

Aiana Rysbekova
INTERNSHIPS & CAREER ADVANCEMENT

FELLOWS PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING AT AUCA

The Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC) at AUCA is a highly regarded tutoring service utilized by many students at the university. WARC tutors are typically among the highest achieving students, and many U.S.-CAEF fellows have been selected to serve their peers through this respected student organization. The WARC team is also known for its family-like atmosphere and distinct camaraderie. Six U.S.-CAEF fellows were selected to become WARC tutors this year. Altynai Nuralieva and Daniel Tairov share their stories below.

ALTYNAI NURALIEVA
Kyrgyzstan, 2018

When I was a freshman fellow, I found out about AUCA’s Writing and Academic Resource Center. Many of the tutors there were junior and senior fellows of the U.S.-CAEF Program. I was charmed by the WARC community as the people there were very intelligent, valued members of our university. Moreover, it seemed they had an appealing camaraderie. Since then, I had a goal of becoming a part of this inspiring team. Now it is the beginning of the fall 2020 semester. Despite the transition to online studying and other hardships caused by the pandemic, I was able to fulfil my long-awaited dream: I have become a part of the WARC team as an Accounting and Writing tutor. Wow, it has really happened! I want to express my sincere gratitude to the U.S.-CAEF Program for providing me with this opportunity and making my dreams come true. I’d also like to give a special thanks to my mentor, Meerim Zhanybek kyzy, who is also an Accounting Tutor at WARC, and is my personal role model and always inspires me to take a step forward.

DANIEL TAIROV
Kyrgyzstan, 2019

AUCA is a university of great opportunities, one of which is engaging in active learning through peer-to-peer tutoring at the Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC). Only those students who demonstrate high academic performance and good communications skills can become WARC tutors. With a cumulative GPA of 3.85, I applied to become a math tutor, and I am happy to say that I was accepted to join the hard-working team at WARC. As I expected, working at WARC is extremely interesting. Students come in with various questions about the courses they are taking and about final exams. It is very rewarding when students ask questions then begin to understand when I start explaining the answer. Those moments confirm for me that the tutoring hour was not spent in vain. Another reason I enjoy being a WARC tutor is that not only the students get to learn—while tutoring, I often learn new things as well. As they say, there is no limit to the perfection of knowledge. And so, my adventures with WARC continue.
Online courses have seen a surge in enrollments since the start of the pandemic worldwide. Many fellows, in addition to their regular university coursework, have turned to additional online learning to improve and learn new knowledge and skills, and stay productive and busy while studying from home.

**MICROECONOMICS DEMYSTIFIED**

*Dina Mamadjanova*, Uzbekistan, 2019:

After following my mentor Olga’s advice, I registered for the Coursera online learning platform to look through the courses provided for students at AUCA. I ultimately found a course that would improve my understanding of common microeconomic theory. Offered by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the inimitable Dr. José J. Vázquez-Cognet, the course proved useful for myself and, undoubtedly, other students around the world. Now I feel determined to use the knowledge I gained during the classes to further my professional growth. Because I enjoyed the course so much, I advised my mentee, Shokhjakhon, to take it as well.”

**FELLOWSHIP FOR FUTURE UX/UI DESIGNERS**

*Nurshoola Aibek kzyzy*, Kyrgyzstan 2017:

At the end of July of this year, I applied for a fellowship program for future UX/UI designers and I was selected as one of 17 finalists among 400 applicants across Kyrgyzstan. This allowed me to take a course instructed by a professional UX/UI designer for free. Since this project was sponsored mainly by the Lead Alliance and the Codify Lab, I want to thank them one more time for giving me the opportunity to learn one of the competitive skills in the IT sphere today. Within 2.5 months of training, I completed three of my own projects that I started from scratch, and just a week ago I successfully defended them all. It was an unforgettable experience, and I hope to develop my skills further in this area.”
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USING ONLINE RESOURCES TO EXPAND KNOWLEDGE

DEBATE ACADEMY 
& SOFT SKILLS COURSE

Gulnoz Faizakova, Tajikistan, 2019:

I took part in Online Debate Academy and a soft skills course organized by American Spaces Tajikistan. It was an incredible opportunity to learn about soft skills: how to ace a job interview, how to build a CV/resume, and how to write an excellent cover letter for different positions. The course was taught by an experienced HR manager, Ramziya Muborakshoeva, who answered all our questions and shared her experience of hiring employees. Also, she provided interesting information about CV’s; for instance, sharing photos on a CV is not necessary and information about your address or gender should not be included. Even though the training took place online, it was indeed very informative and interactive.

Online Debate Academy also helped me in other areas. In every session, different speakers who had years’ worth of experience in debate shared their knowledge and provided tips on how to improve speaking skills. I learned a lot about debate, including how to make strong arguments for different motions. I also learned about the dos and don’ts of debate, and what the judges expect from the debaters. Moreover, I had the opportunity to apply those tips in various rounds of debate during the sessions.”

Help us spread the word about this incredible opportunity for Central Asian youth.

U.S.-CAEF Application 2021 Deadline:
17:00, Monday, January 11th, 2021

Visit uscaef.org
The Foundation’s Regional Internship Program offers Fellows the opportunity to take their first steps toward a successful career. The program allows participants to gain a first-hand look at business operations in the Central Asian region.

Despite businesses around the world going remote due to the pandemic, U.S.-CAEF carried out the Regional Internship Program as usual, and nine rising AUCA junior fellows took part in summer internships at companies in Central Asia. While many internships were remote or had a remote component, the interns found great value in their professional experiences. Interns took on positions at such companies as Neobis, Kompanion Bank, Fresco, and Kreston Bishkek, among others, and performed tasks from conducting marketing research for a new product to analyzing the banking systems of various Central Asian republics. The interns were grateful to U.S.-CAEF and the program alumni who provided them with the opportunity to develop professionally despite the challenges caused by the pandemic.

One fellow, Aiana Rysbekova, remarked of her internship at Kompanion Bank, “I believe that this experience helped me to understand where I want to go next and what knowledge and skills I would need to achieve my goals. Also, I am glad that I could meet my supervisor, who has been more than just a supervisor but a mentor.”

“I enjoyed working and learning new skills at Neobis. I had a great team and a great mentor, U.S.-CAEF alumna Farzona Khaidarova, who assisted me during my internship. I really appreciate her support and hope I can eventually reach a similar level of success. I am also really thankful to the U.S.-CAEF family for providing me a chance to take part in this internship,”

- Muhammad Boymatov

Overall, six interns received job offers from their respective companies upon completion of their internships, a tremendous achievement for first-time interns.
Similarly, the interns’ supervisors found great value in the fellows' contributions to their respective companies.

Avina Abytayeva’s supervisor, Dilger Koilubaev, also had great things to say of Avina:

“I would like to emphasize [Avina’s] ideas and the contribution of her and another intern’s [Altynai Nuralieva] new product, which will be launched in late August as a pilot version. We are thankful to our U.S.-CAEF interns, who made it possible to launch a new credit line, “Onoi,” due to the world pandemic. This credit product will be presented all over in Kyrgyzstan, so U.S.-CAEF should be proud of its fellows who made it possible and workable. Avina is a really unique person who cares about people in her local community, and she therefore suggested giving laptops to local students so they can succeed in their online studies. She thinks about how to digitalize processes in those areas where some people do not even know about how online study platforms work. Moreover, she is by nature a patriotic leader who takes control over any team or situation.”

One of them, Aigul Saparova, who learned valuable project management skills during her internship with Neobis, now leads two important projects for the local companies. Here is Aigul’s story:

“My regional internship at Neobis was undoubtedly a life-changing experience, and I am very thankful to U.S.-CAEF for providing me the opportunity to discover my strengths through participation in an internship that helped me learn about real business processes within the IT sphere.

On August 29, all the teams at Neobis that developed various software products participated in a final competition, during which our team presented an Android app called “Religion and Me.” As a result of our thorough preparation, we placed in the top 3 teams and were recognized for being the most communicative and cohesive team of the summer 2020 season.

Thanks to this experience, I became involved in two commercial projects starting in mid-August. For the first one, I regularly met with the management team of a local construction company and helped them develop a unique task management system. Moreover, for the second commercial project, I am working as a project manager for the German organization GIZ Kyrgyzstan, and am assisting with creating a professional orientation development platform.

Last, but not least, I have become the head of the Neobis Club at AUCA. During my time leading the club, I will be in charge of all administrative tasks related to Neobis members from AUCA.”

We are thrilled that the U.S.-CAEF regional internships were able to continue amidst such an uncertain time. Because of the program, determined U.S.-CAEF fellows were able to learn new skills, narrow down career goals, and expand their professional networks. We hope the participating fellows can use these experiences to their benefit in future professional and academic opportunities.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community outreach while social distancing can be a challenge. However, under the complex conditions brought by COVID-19, U.S.-CAEF fellows showed creativity and resourcefulness, and continued community outreach in the face of the pandemic.

MORE THAN 3,000 FOLLOWERS

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES TAJIKISTAN
BY SARFAROZ YUNUSOV
TAJIKISTAN 2019

It has been over a year since I founded a project in Tajikistan called “Youth Opportunities Tajikistan.” Many young people in Tajikistan are interested in participating in local and international conferences, events, and competitions to learn about how to receive full or partial scholarships from local and international universities. However, they often don’t have any guidance on where these opportunities can be found or who can help them identify these opportunities.

After noticing this need, “Youth Opportunities Tajikistan” was born. Through this youth platform, we collect and share all information about local and international opportunities, host live discussions on social media with alumni and current fellows of various programs, and help youth apply to universities, events, etc. To date, we have launched accounts on four social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and LinkedIn. We currently have more than 3,000 combined followers, and have developed our own logo and brand. As the project has shown quick growth, I recently invited one new person to join the project as a copyrighter and editor.

While we cannot devote all our time to the project due to our studies, we are doing our best to maintain the project and invest our time!

“DARYGER” INITIATIVE
NURMUKHAMAD TURKBEAEV
KYRGYZSTAN, 2018

To help my community during the pandemic crisis, I joined the initiative called “Daryger.” Our main task during this effort was providing transportation, food supplies, hazmat suits, and other personal protective equipment to doctors and medical workers, as well as counseling the local population on medical issues. Specifically, my job was to find volunteers who could cook food for doctors. Sometimes, I was responsible for gathering volunteers and cooking by ourselves. Once, we made over 300 sandwiches for medical workers who did not have immediate access to food. My second task was working on logistics; I was responsible for finding taxi drivers who could deliver personal protective equipment to doctors who work in rural areas. All in all, I am very proud that I was able to help my country during this difficult and critical moment.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

On October 5, the Parliamentary Election was held in Kyrgyzstan. At the end of the day, when the Central Electoral Commission published results of the election, some people were very disappointed with the results. As a result, they began a peaceful protest in Bishkek, which ultimately became a clash between police and people. I live in the downtown area, so the protests occurred very near to where I live. Throughout the night, the street was noisy, the police threw tear gas and set off pneumatics, and protestors threw stones and Molotov cocktails. I was safe at home with my brother during the protests. The next day, I volunteered by helping out at the nearest support center for citizens who were affected and needed help. I helped clean the streets where the protests took place and made sandwiches for people who protect the streets from looters.

PROMOTING RULE OF LAW IN KYRGYZSTAN

I was accepted to participate in Justice Accelerator, a program managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The purpose of the project is to involve teenagers in promoting justice and rule of law in Kyrgyzstan. My team and I are currently working on our project. Thanks to this work, I had an opportunity to meet a lot of successful people, and we are even collaborating with the AUCA law clinic, the National Association of Lawyers of the Kyrgyz Republic, UNODC, and other great organizations.

VOLUNTEERING DURING CIVIL UNREST IN BISHKEK

BY MIRZAALI RUZIMATOV, UZBEKISTAN, 2019

FACILITATE. ASSOCIATE. CONNECT.

By Savangul Mamadloiqova, Tajikistan 2018

From July to August 2020, I was honored to participate as an Associate in an international virtual two-week camp called Camp Connect. Camp Connect united more than 1,100 participants from around the world, as well as more than 200 facilitators to help run the program. Participants from 32 countries came together via Zoom to “engage in cultural exchange, learn new skills, explore the AKDN, collaborate on creative projects, make new friends, participate in dialogue about current issues, and build for the future” (the.ismaili.com).

My role as a Connect Associate included engaging participants in discussion, arranging teambuilding activities, taking daily attendance, and assisting participants with any needs and challenges throughout the program. For facilitators and Associates, building virtual interpersonal relationships with each participant was an essential key to the success of the program. Before the camp started, I took part in a 25-hour training on how to develop interpersonal skills online, how to work with Zoom and other virtual platforms, how to engage participants in discussion and express empathy toward each participant, so they feel they are in a safe environment.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

INTERNATIONAL GIRLSUP SUMMIT

BY SURAYYO KHAYRULLAEVA, UZBEKISTAN, 2020

When I first found out that I won a scholarship from U.S.-CAEF, I was really happy. The amazing feeling I felt at that moment can barely be described in words. Because of the opportunity, I have met very talented, supportive and positive people. Although we have been studying online this semester, we are still full of energy and passion. I am a social and active person; I feel energized when I participate in summits and conferences. So while we have been studying hard, I have been trying to stay active in my social life, too.

Recently, with the help of the Youth Union team in Uzbekistan, we organized the “International GirlsUp Summit.” My role in this project was to give a speech and motivate the girls in attendance. During my speech, I talked about my U.S.-CAEF scholarship, and how it is the primary reason I have been able to discover my hidden talents. Sharing my success story to thousands of people was very humbling. I also talked about how the key to success is not only being good at English or math, but to always remain determined.

I believe U.S.-CAEF is not just a scholarship program. It is a brilliant academic opportunity for young change-makers in Central Asia. We are a close-knit, supportive family; we love U.S.-CAEF and we love AUCA.

WIDENING HORIZONS THROUGH LEARNING ENGLISH

BY TEMIRLAN UTEGULOV, KAZAKHSTAN, 2020

English is an international language that can be used widely around the world and can open up many opportunities to those who learn it. However, the problem is that not everybody has equal educational opportunities. Understanding the importance of this issue, I was inspired to organize an online event dedicated to demonstrating the ways the English language broadens our horizons and giving valuable tips on how to learn it absolutely by yourself and for free.

On June 11, I organized an online project called “Widen Your Horizons through the English Language” which was aimed at helping people to understand the value of this language as well as share some useful tips and tricks on how to boost your English learning experience. Along with the main guest, an English language specialist from the Philippines, and some other FLEX Program Alumni, I shared my experience of learning this language and presented to participants how our horizons were widened by English. We also talked about various ways to start learning English without any paid English tutors. A total of 80 students took part in this event and had a chance to learn a lot about the importance of English and ways of studying it through free resources. Organizing this project allowed me to acquire crucial skills like proper time management, organizational skills, communication skills, and responsibility.
NEW ALUMNI LEADERSHIP TEAM

Following elections in July, Presidents of the AUCA and KIMEP chapters form Alumni Association’s leadership comprising representatives from both AUCA and KIMEP University from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan:

Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy
PRESIDENT
AUCA CHAPTER

Irina Abasova
PRESIDENT
KIMEP CHAPTER

Sevara Tadzhibaeva
VICE PRESIDENT
FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AUCA

Alisher Murtazaev
VICE PRESIDENT
FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
KIMEP UNIVERSITY

Imangeldi Dzhumabaev
VICE PRESIDENT
FOR OUTREACH, AUCA

Aina Anmageldiyeva
VICE PRESIDENT
FOR OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION
KIMEP UNIVERSITY

Paluan Rimov
VICE PRESIDENT
FOR FINANCE
KIMEP UNIVERSITY

Shaismam Shabiev
VICE PRESIDENT
FOR FINANCE, AUCA

Gavkharkhon Mamadjzhanova
ALUMNI COORDINATOR
IN TAJIKISTAN, AUCA &
KIMEP UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI GRANT FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

On October 1, American Councils received a $200,000 grant from the U.S.-Department of State for the first U.S.-CAEF Regional Alumni Conference to be held in Almaty in 2021. This endorses the good work of alumni and recognizes them as potential leaders of change in Central Asia.

The conference will strengthen ties between U.S. CAEF alumni, the U.S. Embassies in Central Asia, and the alumni networks of their respective countries; offer valuable new resources, and career advice in their professional fields; provide workshops from U.S. government representatives, business leaders, regional experts, and outstanding alumni on issues critical to young professionals in Central Asia, including the impact of COVID-19, prospects for greater regional cooperation, and strategies to combat disinformation; and foster new mentoring relationships between older alumni, recent graduates, and current fellows that will strengthen bonds between U.S.-CAEF participants for years to come.
ALUMNI CLOSE UP

A HIGHWAY TO SUCCESS: TIPS ON CHASING YOUR DREAMS

BY AISULU RYSPAEEVA & AIGUL SAPAROVA

Arystan Moldabekov, KIMEP’11, is a U.S.-CAEF alumnus from Kazakhstan. He earned his Master of Science at the University of London. Upon graduation, he was selected as one of the top 25 best performers at a contest and was offered a job at Ernst & Young Kazakhstan. After working there for three years, he chose to shift his career towards global finance services, and since that shift, he has worked in many positions including as the Chief Accountant at Capital Bank Kazakhstan. Arystan, was recently appointed Director of Finance at Kazakhstan Investment Development Fund (KIDF). The organization is chaired by the top government officials of Kazakhstan- the country’s Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Below, Arystan shared his story of success.

Q: How has the U.S.-CAEF influenced your life? Did the experience gained on the program help you?

Yes. U.S.-CAEF provided me with support for my future career aspirations. Luckily for me, U.S.-CAEF was launched the same year I applied to my dream university, KIMEP. This probably was one of the key moments that influenced my education, the goals I set for myself, and my career. The program offers so many wonderful opportunities that I must always highlight.

Q: What inspired you to choose the path of a financier?

In the 2000s, the banking industry in Kazakhstan was rapidly developing and represented a prestigious industry that determined my preferred work sphere. Also, while being in the USA with the FLEX Program, I observed how the financial world operates. I understood that innovations in finance will never stop and decided not to be among trend followers, but to be among those introducing these innovations.

Q: In your opinion, has the finance industry changed over the past five years? What have you seen inside your company?

I believe it has changed not only in Kazakhstan but worldwide as well. After the financial crisis, the Basel Committee made conclusions and strict risk-oriented procedures for the financial institutions. If earlier banks could enter risky transactions and earn significant profits, the new regulations have sharply reduced the banks’ ability to enter such high-risk deals. Various derivative instruments that were previously used by banks, became “outlawed” and decreased the profitability of the financial sector.

Q: Who is a financier in your opinion?

The role of a financier has undergone significant change. Now, a financier not only prepares reports or calculates funds, but also correctly distributes assets, plans, predicts, neatly structures future transactions, and monitors market risks. In short, a financier does not own a small area of work but must be able to do much more than in the past.

Q: What professional achievement are you most proud of?

I believe that all our achievements are the reflection of past successes. I hope that everything is still ahead, but speaking of the previous ones, I want to note my current accomplishments. Today, I am Head of Finance and Chief Accountant at the Kazakhstan Investment Development Fund, chaired by the Prime Minister.
together with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. The fund has a focus on the international market, and the main task is to invest in the development of regions.

**Q: What do you think about the current prospects of the financial industry in Central Asia? How can the younger generation help to improve this area?**

The resounding success of the financial sector, which was inherent in 2000s, is now less evident due to some problems in the banking sector, but I can say that we have a developing market, the possibilities of which have not yet been fully realized. Therefore, this task falls on the shoulders of a rising generation, which has a completely new way of thinking and draws knowledge from international practices.

**Q: Currently, many U.S.-CAEF students are future candidates to maintain a financier’s job. What skills do they need to develop now to meet the demands of an exemplary financial worker in the future?**

At first, it is hard to apply all theoretical knowledge without the ability to quickly adapt and be flexible. Therefore, flexibility and agility are vital. You gradually delve into routine things, and then you will move on to more analytical tasks, where all your knowledge will be needed. Soft skills also play a huge role, since it is ineffective to simply analyze and build financial models. You need to be able to communicate, correctly present your ideas, to argue and structure your thoughts, and most importantly, to defend your position.

**Q: What would you like to share with U.S.-CAEF fellows who are looking to pursue a career in finance?**

My main advice is to set high goals and do not give up on them. Sometimes you may not have the opportunity to achieve your goals, but from my personal experience, I would like to say that this is not a reason to stop. Besides, U.S.-CAEF students are people who have already passed a rigorous selection process and have been selected as potential future leaders. Who, if not you, will set these lofty goals and achieve them? Therefore, set goals, strive for them and you will always succeed.

“...U.S.-CAEF provided me with support for my future career aspirations...This probably was one of the key moments that influenced my education, the goals I set for myself, and my career. The program offers so many wonderful opportunities”
ALUMNI CLOSE UP

FROM FOUNDATIONS TO FUSION
BY AZIZ YULDASHEV

It is always interesting to read the U.S.-CAEF Newsletter and the stories in it about current fellows and other alumni. For this, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the American Councils team for keeping in touch, doing such a great job of updating the quarterly newsletter, and organizing alumni meetings. What I rarely see in the newsletter, however, are stories from Uzbekistan, so let me share mine.

Almost thirteen years have passed since Saule Kussayeva (U.S.-CAEF Coordinator) and Stanley Currier (Former Regional Director in Central Asia for American Councils) met four guys from Uzbekistan at the entrance of the KIMEP dormitory where they showed us our rooms, helped us settle down, and even treated us to lunch; I remember it as though it were yesterday.

Four years had passed quickly at KIMEP, good times when some of the best memories were made. After graduating in 2011, I returned to Tashkent and, like any recent graduate, I began to look for work. My first employer was Tashkent City Municipality, followed by Coca-Cola Bottlers Uzbekistan. There, I had many positions: first, I started in the administration department, I became a procurement specialist, and then, I moved into the legal department. Eventually I finished my career with Coca-Cola Bottlers as the executive assistant to the general director where I had my own office and car. In that role I had business trips that took me to Istanbul and Atlanta, I was responsible for public communications and meetings with the American Chamber of Commerce, and I participated in the U.S.-Uzbekistan Business Seminars organized by Ambassador Pamela Spratlen. I worked with the U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan, I coordinated sponsorship projects between Coca-Cola and Olympic Committee of Uzbekistan and worked on joint social projects with the United Nations in Uzbekistan. If someone had told me that I was going to be a part of so much two years prior, I would not have believed them.

Now I am a Project Manager at Enter Engineering – the largest construction company in Uzbekistan with a staff of 19,000 people. The company employs specialists from all over the world, having relationships with the leading companies in the field of construction. I never could have imagined that construction projects could be so complicated prior to working here.

One of the most significant projects of the company is the construction of the first nuclear power plant (NPP) in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Having been initiated by the leaders of Uzbekistan and Russia, this project is critical for Uzbekistan as it will allow us to diversify and significantly increase our power generation capacities. It will make us
ALUMNI CLOSE UP

A member of the international “Nuclear Club” (countries who have NPPs), we will become members of the Inter-national Atomic Energy Agency, and it will jump start the development of nuclear science in our country.

Being the responsible manager on the NPP construction project, our team was involved in negotiations with our Russian counterparts. Due to the uniqueness of the project and the need to understand the highest construction performance standards, our team visited nuclear power plants in Japan, Bangladesh, Ukraine, and Belarus to learn about best practices related to the implementation phase of such a complex project. As of the writing of this article, negotiations with our Russian partners are still ongoing.

Currently, our company is conducting negotiations with the top management of an American Partner, Air Products, who is willing to make an investment in Uzbekistan and implement several large-scale projects in the production of industrial gases. Recently, our team came back from London where we had negotiations with our American counterparts. We all hope negotiations will end up successfully.

Uzbekistan is in transition period right now. I truly hope that through cooperation, integration into the world economy, and the implementation of projects with global partnerships with leading foreign companies my country will be able to improve and progress. Being where I am now and being a part of the changes happening while having an opportunity to contribute to them is a once-in-a-lifetime chance and I am greatly honored by it.

In short, I would like to say that all of us achieve some heights and continue to move towards our goals and it is good to know that there is a foundation with a great team who have continued to support us from the beginning. They helped us gain such an invaluable education that has laid a solid basis for our current and future achievements.

Since the original writing of this story, Aziz has shared a few more updates with the U.S.-CAEF staff. In his latest updates, Aziz discussed how he and his team are working on several major projects including the construction of a gas chemical complex that will cost about 2.8 billion USD by the time it is completed. In addition, they are working on the modernization of the Ferghana refinery to produce oil-based products such as fuels, high quality motor oil, and lubricants that will meet European standards.
HOW GRIT AND MOTIVATION LEAD TO SUCCESS

BY DILRABO SAIDALIEVA

Dinara Atantayeva, KIMEP’13, is a U.S.-CAEF alumna from Kazakhstan. She earned her Master’s in International Business Management and Finance at Heriot-Watt University in the United Kingdom after receiving the Bolashak Scholarship. Since then, she has been working her way up the corporate ladder and today, Dinara is the Senior Manager of the Economics and Development Department at the Sovereign National Welfare Fund “Samruk-Kazyna,” which owns, either in whole or in part, a number of major companies in the country, including the national rail and postal service, the state oil and gas company KazMunayGas, the state uranium company Kazatomprom, Air Astana, and others. Dinara shared her story in the interview conducted by KIMEP senior Dilrabo Saidalieva.
Q: What made you choose KIMEP and U.S.-CAEF?

I determined for myself at quite an early age, in 5th or 6th grade, that KIMEP University is the best place for my higher education. I had an English teacher who happened to work with KIMEP University representatives on several educational projects in my region and she had many informative materials about the university. After learning about the beautiful campus, their one-of-a-kind library, professors with diverse backgrounds, and hearing positive feedback from the alumni, I quickly made up my mind. The only concern was finding a scholarship, and that was washed away when American Councils representatives visited my school to present the U.S.-CAEF Enterprise Fellowship program for undergraduate students. It was exactly what I needed, and I did my best to get accepted. I am very grateful for the countless amazing opportunities U.S.-CAEF has offered to me and all the other fellows, even those who lived in faraway parts of Kazakhstan like Semey city.

Q: Please, tell us about your career journey and your experience climbing up the corporate ladder (the ups and downs, the struggles). What did it take to become a Senior Manager in the Economics and Development Department at Samruk-Kazyna?

The corporate world has a lot to offer you: interesting people, challenging tasks, and resources. KIMEP professors always stressed the importance of mentorship, and indeed, from the very first year of my job I participated in a mentorship program where my supervisor was appointed to be my mentor. She helped me navigate my career at Tengizchevroil LLP and shared useful advice based on her 20 years of industry experience. I was assigned challenging and sometimes very difficult tasks that provided me with opportunities that led me to where I am. Whenever you manage to find and implement a solution for the most difficult part of your job, you start broadening your job functions and perspectives as a project leader. As for resources, there are always different trainings, certifications, software, and best practices the company can offer its employees to improve. After I equipped my industry background with my master's degree from Heriot-Watt University I was offered the position of Senior Manager at Samruk-Kazyna. In short, it took nothing but hard work and persistence.

Q: What is important to you and what motivates you?

Considering the global pandemic of 2020 has rapidly changed the world on individual and global scales, I can certainly say that health is what is important to me. I wish for everyone to stay safe and healthy, no matter what.

Living in these challenging times is beyond everyone’s comfort zone and makes every person reconsider their values and goals in life. Mine have shifted towards personal life, family, and health. I used to be all about work with strict attention to every aspect and detail of my job. Now I fully reconsidered my approach and I think I am now on my way to finding “life balance”. I know it sounds cliché, but it is something I always wanted to learn.

The great sources of motivation for me is my family, their constant support and believe in me and, also, my friends with their great life achievements which inspires me.

Q: What do current graduates need to be competitive in the job market? What do you look for in your subordinates?

I can name three skills which I consider crucial. The first is the ability to adapt. Most of the time work will consist of challenges, and the way an employee adapts will define his or her future. In my experience, employees are divided into two groups: those who critically evaluate the situation and come up with creative solutions, and those who start feeling stressed and, as a result, will focus on complaining about the lack of resources and come up with excuses why the task cannot be accomplished. Be from the first group.

The second skill is teamwork. This is a combination of both communication skills and emotional intelligence. Which means be ready to act in the best interest of your group and control your emotions. It is very rare when one person can make a difference in a workplace without any support. Being ready to cooperate and provide mutual support is key to advancing your own projects in future. As for emotions, always treat the colleagues around you with respect and patience. Especially, during difficult situations such behavior helps bring negative people to see the positive side of things.

The third is constant learning. Get the highest possible marks for your majors and never stop learning.

At the end I would like to thank you, Dilrabo, and all the team for this interview. I also used to interview successful alumni for the U.S.-CAEF Newsletter and always dreamed of being interviewed as one of the successful alumni. Thank you for this opportunity!
The COVID-19 crisis continues to impose massive uncertainty about public health and economic well-being. During these challenging times, U.S.-CAEF Alumni and Fellows made a difference with their contributions in response to COVID-19 organizing charitable campaigns to support vulnerable populations, providing COVID-19 tests, and helping front-line workers and hospitals.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

“BIZ BARBYZ” ACTION INITIATIVE

At the end of March of 2020 U.S.-CAEF alumna Anisa Atalova, AUCA'16, Urmat Nasykulov, CEO and Managing Director of Change Fitness, and eight other people initiated the volunteer movement “Biz Barbyz”. Anisa volunteered as the primary financial manager and fundraiser for “Biz Barbyz.” At the outset, the movement’s goals were to help families who were left without food during the quarantine and to provide the medical staff of the hospitals with personal protective equipment. As the first wave of COVID-19 hit Kyrgyzstan in July of 2020, “Biz Barbyz” widened its areas of work and focused on helping the population with needed medicine, purchasing and donating oxygen concentrators, providing meals, and supplying PPE for medical staff at hospitals. Donations were received from all over the world — individuals, businesses, locals, and people from abroad, both in monetary and non-monetary forms. Overall, the donations from March of 2020 till October of 2020 amounted to around $250,000. The movement is continued its activity as the second wave of the pandemic hit the country. Since March more than 200 volunteers have been engaged in the work of the movement from all the parts of the country.

SUPPORTING FARMERS DURING A PANDEMIC IN TAJIKISTAN

BY GUFRONJON AIUBJONOV, KIMEP'14

This year has been challenging for many sectors and for humanity in general. The world is facing a serious threat from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused damage to nearly every country’s economy, companies, and people. The impact of the pandemic in the agricultural sector of Tajikistan was quite severe. Due to border closures, labor migrants were unable to go abroad to support their families. In the beginning of the growing season, Tajikistan banks suspended the issuance of loans to farmers for planting. In addition to these problems, frequent rains were observed in April and May, which directly affected the agricultural sector. Many farmers have re-sowed.

With these problems in mind, my colleagues and I decided to find some donors who would support farmers in need. Fortunately, GIZ (German Agency for International Coopera-tion) agreed to provide some support. After coming up with a clear objective and plan, GIZ approved our idea to disperse over 170,000 kg of mineral fertilizers to farmers, valued at about one million Tajik somoni (about $100,000). Our team decided to give each needy farmer 300 kg of mineral fertilizers, allowing us to support more than 550 farmers. Throughout this process, I was responsible for distributing the mineral fertilizers to both the Sogd and Khatlon oblasts.

Thankfully, we received the 170,000 kg of high quality mineral fertilizers (NPK) during the vegetation period, and immediately formed a committee to deliver the fertilizers to each farmer personally. It was very emotional as each farmer expressed their gratitude for our help. Even though we are not a charity organization, we wanted to make a positive contribution during this hard period of time. I was so proud of my team for helping to make people’s lives better.
In July, during the peak of the pandemic crisis in Kyrgyzstan, U.S.-CAEF alumna Asel Kaldybaeva, AUCA’13, could not just sit and watch while people in her community were suffering. Asel and her younger brother became some of the first volunteers who were part of the “Help Issyk-Kul” initiative created by Edil Ajibaev, founder of PicVPic.com, and played a key role in the success of the project. They saw a need within their community for medical supplies in the Issyk-Kul region which grew with each passing month that the pandemic continued. As they began this journey, about thirty more volunteers joined the project.

This volunteer work reminded me one more time how proud I am to be part of the U.S.-CAEF family. Any time when we need people to help us, I can be confident that U.S.-CAEF family will be there,”

-Asel
Deeply moved by Asel’s determination and selflessness, U.S.-CAEF alumni Uulzhan Aitnazarova AUCA’16, Shaislam Shabiev AUCA’16, and Sevara Tadzhibaeva AUCA’16 joined the project as well. And despite being thousands of miles away, U.S.-CAEF alumna, Zhamilia Klycheva AUCA’13, a graduate student in California, initiated a GoFundMe campaign, and was able to raise an additional $14,260 through the crowdfunding platform.

The project itself was carried out methodically by its volunteers. They began by collecting information, contacting every hospital within the region to identify their needs and to determine how best they might support them. During this process, the project built positive relationships with the doctors who would then feel comfortable enough to share important information about the ongoing pandemic. The result of this was that the project and its volunteers would become liaisons between the region’s doctors and the public.

In one example Asel gave, one of the doctors she had been communicating with shared an issue about medical personnel who would work with patients who had symptoms of COVID-19 and that they would simply go home from work rather than being able to quarantine for the appropriate amount of time. As a result, these medical staff were inadvertently infecting their families. Through local activism and some research, Asel was able to discover this was not an issue contained to a single hospital but was apparent in every hospital in Issyk-Kul. The doctors would not express their concerns however to the region’s administration for fear of losing their positions. After sharing this issue with the media, and within two days of the first publication about this, the hospitals began to change their procedures to reduce the risk by having doctors who worked with COVID-19 patients by allowing them to quarantine. This was just one of many positive changes Asel and “Help Issyk-Kul” were able to bring about.

By the end of the project, “Help Issyk-Kul” was able to raise a total of $50,584 to provide much-needed help to medical workers and COVID-19 patients, and they even bought an ambulance for the hospital in Taldy Suu village. They were able to procure and deliver throughout the region 722 packs of vital medications for treating acute pneumonia and COVID-19 including Oksopar, Clexane, or Heparinum. They also purchased and distributed seven oxygen concentrators and two coagulometers. In addition, Asel’s team prepared videos to teach people how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and encouraged city doctors to conduct training on treating the virus for their colleagues in the rural areas of the Issyk-Kul region.

The solidarity of people exhibited through volunteering is heartening. It will not be an understatement to say that thanks to volunteers like Asel, now Kyrgyzstan is on the road to recovery from the crisis.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

“BE SAFE” APP IN KAZAKHSTAN

BY TEMILRAN UTEGULOV, KAZAKHSTAN, 2020

The global pandemic has negatively impacted not only our economic but social well-being too. As an active participant in her community, Moldir was thinking of various ways she could ease the situation in her home country. Due to the shortage of medical staff in hospitals, at first, Moldir was considering becoming a volunteer since local hospitals needed extra hands. However, she thought that with tech solutions she could make a more consequential impact.

While researching and exploring ideas, Moldir learned about PathCheck Foundation, a volunteer-led nonprofit organization founded at MIT with a specific purpose of developing COVID-19 apps for digital contact tracing. Lots of students, and professionals from different spheres, including Moldir, joined the foundation to help their societies around the globe. Moldir worked together with a team from MIT to launch the “Be Safe” tracing application adapted for Kazakhstan. The original application “SafePath” was invented by Ramesh Raskar, associate professor at MIT.

The application utilizes Bluetooth technology to identify people you have been near within the last fourteen days. If you have come in contact with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last fourteen days, the application will alert you so that you may take the necessary precautions. Additionally, the application includes recommendations of the Ministry of Healthcare of Kazakhstan on the first steps that need to be taken after receiving the notification.

Before launching the app, Moldir contacted major local hospitals that could handle a significant flow of affected people and received significant support from medical professionals and administrators. However, to implement the project Moldir needed to resolve many legal issues and receive approval from the Ministry of Healthcare of Kazakhstan which turned out to be challenging. Unfortunately, due to some changes to the regulations introduced by the Ministry of Healthcare, Moldir had to redo all paperwork. Despite all these obstacles, finally, in October, Moldir was able to successfully launch “Be Safe” in Kazakhstan.

Even though implementing this project was a path full of hardships, Moldir gained valuable experience and learned about the importance of perseverance.

“Whatever happens, it’s crucial to raise your voice and pursue your goals”

The app has been recently announced in Kazakhstani newspaper!

5 November 2020
kazpravda.kz
MAKING A DIFFERENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

EXPANDING COVID-19 TESTING IN KAZAKHSTAN

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 technicians have been testing for COVID-19. In the third quarter of this year, Yuliya opened two new testing sites for COVID-19, one of which is at the Almaty International Airport, and currently, she is opening another branch at Nur-Sultan International Airport. Grinlab provides four different types of tests for COVID-19 and the test results come in several languages including English. The lab also provides free tests for people from high-risk groups.

2 NEW COVID-19 TESTING SITES
ALMATY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
+ NUR-SULTAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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