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 THE SUPPORT OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, ITS CITIZENS AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN-AMERICAN ENTERPRISE FUND, WHICH HAVE MADE ITS OPERATION POSSIBLE.
CARRYING ON THE U.S.-CAEF TRADITIONS

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, U.S.-CAEF fellows have carried on the traditions initiated by their predecessors and continued to lead the student organizations founded by the program fellows of earlier cohorts. Currently, Case Club and Accounting Club are among the most popular student organizations at AUCA, due to the leadership of U.S.-CAEF fellows.

BY CREATING & LEADING CLUBS, U.S.-CAEF FELLOWS HAVE HELPED ENRICH THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AT AUCA.

AUCA juniors Zebojon Rasulova and Muhammad Boymatov of Tajikistan were elected as new leaders of the Case Club.

Case Club

Created in 2016 by U.S.-CAEF fellows, Samatbek Osmonov, Kutubbek Rakhmanberdiev, Azim Tilekov, and Kanat Osmonov, the club provides a platform for its members to understand the intricacies of modern businesses and develop effective teamwork, leadership, public speaking, and presentation skills, and organizes university and nation-wide case competitions, which prepare students to test their skills in the international arena.

Of the 21 new members of the Case Club, 10 sophomores and freshmen are U.S.-CAEF fellows:

- Dina Mamadjanova
- Yiman Altynbek uulu
- Farangis Mirzobekova
- Lola Umarova
- Farukh Farkhatov
- Aizana Arslanbekova
- Fariza Dusmatova
- Aziza Jobirova
- Nekkhotun Qirghizbekova
- Baktygul Tazhamatova

I am beyond thankful for the confidence U.S.-CAEF taught me, which helps me take on new challenges.

— AISULUU RYSPAeva
The Accounting Club organized the first nation-wide Accounting Olympiad in Kyrgyzstan last year. The new leadership team plans to attract new members not only from AUCA, but outside the university as well, including high school seniors eager to learn about the basics of accounting. With the help of AUCA’s Development Department, the officers are planning to offer internship opportunities to some club members. They also hope to organize the second Accounting Olympiad in the fall of 2021.

The Accounting Club was co-funded by U.S.-CAEF seniors Uulzhan Aitnazarova, Shaislam Shabiev, and Zhyldyz Apyshova last year, 2020.

I have joined two clubs, both run by U.S.-CAEF fellows: Case Club and Accounting Club. There, I am learning about running businesses and solving cases that I found quite interesting and beneficial, and I hope to continue participating in related contests. These skills will be of great help in founding and running my own startup in the future.

— YIMAN ALTYNBEK UULU
CARRYING ON THE U.S.-CAEF TRADITIONS: NEW CLUBS!

InnoLab

Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, sophomores Yerkebulan Askarbekov of Kazakhstan and Mirzaali Ruzimatov of Uzbekistan, both majoring in Applied Mathematics and Informatics, recently co-founded an IT club called “InnoLab.”

InnoLab

Volunteering club

Another sophomore, Aisuluu Ryspaeva, started a volunteering club in the fall. Aisuluu shared her story:

To better serve my alma-mater, AUCA, I came up with an idea to open a volunteering club and find caring and ambitious leaders who could support this mission. Around 40 smart individuals, including U.S.-CAEF fellows, have joined the club. Despite the global pandemic, we were able to set up goals for this semester and have already organized educational and holiday events online. Recently, we found an opportunity to help visually impaired people. We plan on recording podcasts on different themes, starting with TED-talks and finishing with “How to win a scholarship.” I hope our work will greatly benefit people in need.

In addition, I was chosen to represent the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX) at AUCA. This organization is one of the most important sources of educational opportunities in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, it is an honor for me to be an official ambassador for FLEX. My duties include implementing various U.S. Government (USG)-sponsored grants, and other projects dedicated to improving different aspects of the community.
Throughout their undergraduate studies, fellows use many opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills on and off campus, learn about local industries, test their entrepreneurial potential, establish important business contacts, and explore career paths. Fellows understand that applying what they learn in the classroom to real world is extremely valuable in helping them transform university knowledge into true understanding and action. In the passages below, fellows share their stories about practical experiences they found useful and fulfilling.

**Photo Studio “Khushruy”**

**FARANGIS MIRZOBEKOVA**

During the fall break, AUCA sophomore Farangis Mirzobekova came up with the idea of opening the first professional photo studio in Khorog. She found a space and renovated it together with her sister and friends, hired a photographer, and opened the studio, which they named “Khushruy” (“Beautiful”).

“Our main goal was to create a place where people would feel comfortable. We have already worked with several clients and are fully booked until the end of December, which shows that we have done a great job. This experience is very precious for me because I have learned a lot: starting from business planning to client service. I am very grateful to my friends and family for their support. This is just the beginning of our journey. I hope greater things are awaiting us”.

**Career Path Confirmed**

**BEKZAD SADYRBAEV**

I always wanted to gain work experience in a marketing agency. This year, I was able to fulfill my dream. I worked in one of the best marketing agencies in Kyrgyzstan “Mr. Marketing LLC.”

I was able to complete many projects and meet professional people. I had a chance to work for international projects by Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (conducting research on CIS countries), ARUPALACE (helping create a premium company in Kazakhstan), and many others. Through these experiences, I have acquired important communication, stress resistance, time management, and marketing skills, and confirmed that I want to continue my professional career in the marketing sphere.

**Developing IT Skills**

**SARFAROZ YUNUSOV**

During the summer, I interned as an Android Developer at one of the leading IT companies in Tajikistan, “Colibri IT Innovations.”

I assisted with the development of several Android applications for national projects. I was part of a team that consisted of a project manager, a designer, and a senior Android developer. We worked together to analyze and discuss clients' needs and potential solutions based on clients’ requirements. As my freshman knowledge was not enough for my position, I completed several online courses from Coursera and intensively practiced my skills after work hours.

The internship was an excellent chance for me to improve my coding and problem-solving skills, and to understand how IT companies function, what fundamental values leading IT companies should have, and what role they play in local businesses. Moreover, I had a chance to expand my network and meet like-minded people who are eager to boost the IT sector in Tajikistan.
Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan
BY ISLAMBEK ASHYRALIEV (RIGHT)

I am currently interning at the Women Entrepreneurship Development Foundation (the Foundation or WEDF) through the FLEX Exchanges to Internships Program. The Foundation is a local non-governmental organization aiming to promote women's entrepreneurship development.

Since the first day of the internship, I have been trusted with important tasks. On November 20-22, WEDF organized a Hackathon for 80 women from seven regions of Kyrgyzstan who already had operating businesses. The goal of the Hackathon was to help women digitize their ventures and promote them on social media. I had the important responsibility of tracking the performance of the 80 participants during the three days of the Hackathon and select 40 women for the Business School.

It was an amazing experience. Interacting with these businesswomen energized and motivated me. Some of the participants were nursing mothers and had to take care of their babies during lunch breaks. Hearing about the obstacles they have faced and overcome, I understood how hard it is for women in Kyrgyzstan to work and take care of their families and home chores. They have so many creative ideas, but they often do not have time to realize them. I would like to encourage all men to support their wives, sisters, and mothers in their new endeavors.

Putting IT Skills Into Practice: Interning with C-Technology
BY SEZIM KANATOVA (CENTER)

After completing the IT Academy’s Java and Web Development courses, I started applying for various job and internship positions. After 30+ applications and 10+ interviews, I was finally accepted as a back-end intern to C-Technology, an outsourcing company providing IT support and development services such as mobile development, web development, and data analytics. In December, I started as a part-time junior developer.

Due to the lack of front-end developers, I was also assigned to do some front-end tasks. Five of us are currently working on the Demir Bank’s client website and web portal for employee use. What I like most about my position is that we are assigned a mentor who teaches us what we do not know. Thus, I am acquiring not only technical knowledge, but also soft skills, which are important when you work in a professional team with front- and back-end developers, designers, and analysts.

Another advantage is that I work together with young developers; the average age of all employees is approximately 26 (I am the youngest!). However, balancing my studies and work is challenging. But these challenges have boosted my communication and negotiation skills. My supervisors allowed me to have a flexible schedule that helps me balance work and study. This experience also taught me to manage my time efficiently. I come to realized that the more you struggle, the more you learn.

Interning for the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association
BY AISULUU RYSPAeva

U.S.-CAEF does not end after graduation. Moreover, it is a starting point for the journey called “Alumni.” It amazes me how many talented alumni we have in our community; working with and for them inspires me to develop different skills, explore innovative ideas, and learn invaluable knowledge. I was chosen to be an SMM manager along with my colleague, U.S.-CAEF freshmen Baktygul Tazhamatova and Bakhtovar Umarnov. Together, we work to build a bridge between alumni and fellows by implementing different ideas. For example, the Telegram Channel of U.S.-CAEF has recently launched a new activity called “CAEF Books,” where all alumni are welcome to share their favorite books with the community. All in all, it has been an engaging experience so far, and I would like to thank our President, Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy, for her efforts, support, and help.
Deadlines and exams were hectic, but thanks to great teamwork, we managed to achieve 2nd place among 56 teams! — Avina Abytaeva

**FinOlimp Case Championship**

AUCA juniors **Altynai Nuralieva, Aiana Rysbekova, Bekzat Sailau**, and **Avina Abytaeva** came in second in the FinOlimp Case Championship organized by Bank of Asia in partnership with Baker Tilly. During the competition, they solved real business cases against 224 students and young professionals from all over Kyrgyzstan. The experience taught them that their university knowledge and practical experience are equally important, and that discipline and teamwork are key ingredients to success. The team is grateful to alumnus **Azatbek Ismailov**, who provided helpful tips before their final presentation. Fellows shared their feedback about the event:

**Bekzat Sailau**

This experience taught me that cooperation is the key feature to success. We could have easily postponed our online meetings, however, we chose to spend time together to solve the case, which took huge amounts of discipline and concentration. While participating in FinOlimp I learned to respect the time and contribution of my teammates. Seeing how they worked hard motivated me to keep doing my best regardless of any circumstances."

2nd in the FinOlimp Case Championship out of 224 students

**Altynai Nuralieva**

This experience taught me that cooperation is the key feature to success. We could have easily postponed our online meetings, however, we chose to spend time together to solve the case, which took huge amounts of discipline and concentration. While participating in FinOlimp I learned to respect the time and contribution of my teammates. Seeing how they worked hard motivated me to keep doing my best regardless of any circumstances."

**Aiana Rysbekova**

While studying at AUCA, we sometimes doubt whether the knowledge will be useful in our future careers. However, I concluded that any knowledge from assignments or exams is useful if you practice it on real cases. Presenting our solution to the Baker Tilly audit and finance partners was a beneficial experience. Their feedback and questions gave us a lot of insights not only about our calculations but about the overall work that we completed throughout the whole month."

**Avina Abytaeva**

Last year, I could only dream about participating in FinOlimp, but this year, thanks to the best team, we, juniors, were able to overtake many teams in the championship. For me, it was a test for time management, since online classes take a lot of time and it is very difficult to manage time efficiently. I am very grateful to my teammates for their motivation and support – we had to stay up all night to solve the case and did not sleep. The classes that we took at AUCA helped us in solving the financial part of the case, and knowledge of the Excel program helped us show our competitive advantage."
EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

VIRTUAL REGIONAL DEBATE TOURNAMENT

BY IMRAN ALIMOV

I became a finalist of the Virtual Regional Debate Tournament organized by C5+1 Youth Council. C5+1 Youth Council, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, gathers students from Central Asian countries to represent their views and to establish sustainable communication between Central Asian youth representatives. After passing the application process, my teammate and I debated for two days, in six rounds with different teams. As a result, out of 40 teams, only the 4 best teams with the highest results became finalists. Each round had different agendas, starting from environmental problems and ending with human rights. In addition, I am proud to say that I became the best speaker from Tajikistan.

This event showed me the importance of being able to look at problems from different perspectives and effectively communicate my point of view.

I would like to encourage our fellows to participate in debates, Model UN, and Model OSCE, because during these events, you will have a breakthrough in critical thinking, analyzing and communication skills. I am sure all these are very needed skills in the current, quickly changing environment and will help you succeed.
EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

GAING DIVERSE KNOWLEDGE THROUGH EUROBAK
BY IMRAN ALIMOV & ZEVAR MAMADJONOVA

The European Business Association of Kazakhstan (EUROBAK) annually conducts different educational projects. This year, KIMEP juniors Imran Alimov and Zevar Mamadjonova were selected to participate in two projects organized by the EUROBAK HR University and EUROBAK Marketing and PR University of Practical Knowledge held from September 22 to November 26.

These projects are organized to enhance the level of practical knowledge of university students and graduates in human resource management and marketing. Each program consisted of ten lectures where we would listen to various speakers from different companies, such as EY, Philip Morris, Red Bull, Takeda, EFES, and many others. The lectures were very informative, introducing different perspectives of both the marketing and HR management fields.

I personally enjoyed both projects. I learned a lot of new information. Even though the lectures were held online, they were very interactive, and we could ask questions, have group discussions, and communicate with each of the speakers. All speakers assigned homework, which was graded, and at the end, we took final tests for each project. The names of the ten best students were announced during the Zoom commencement session.

I was one of the top ten students at EUROBAK HR University who received the highest scores by the end of the course. I feel very lucky to have participated in both projects and diversified my knowledge. It was a great opportunity for me to explore the Marketing and HR spheres and to choose an additional future career path. Now, having finished and analyzed my experience from these universities, I want to try my professional skills in the management sphere. Therefore, joining the recommendation of our alumna Gavkharkhon Mamadzhanova, thanks to whom I learned about EUROBAK, I want to encourage our fellows not to limit themselves with their field of studies but diversify their knowledge and try different things like participating in educational projects organized by the European Business Association of Kazakhstan," shared Zevar Mamadjonova.

During the classes, the emphasis was placed directly on practical experience: real cases, tasks, interactive games, recommendations, and best practices from the international and Kazakhstani markets. I gained valuable knowledge, which widened my worldview in the context of how business is done in international companies. The information I received was different from what I learned during university classes. Now I understand how valuable it is to search for opportunities to develop and gain diverse knowledge and skills. This will certainly help me succeed in professional life," wrote Imran Alimov about his experience.
EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

“Map of Wishes” App
BY YIMAN ALTYNBEK UULU

Recently, I had a chance to participate in a hackathon where I developed an application project, “Карта желаний” (“Map of Wishes”). The event was organized and sponsored by UNICEF in association with UTLABS. The basic idea of the app is that a user who needs help may leave a sticker with his/her contact information on the map and nearby volunteers can help him or her by clicking on the sticker. The app provides built-in chat and other interesting features. It has been released on Google Play.

Learning Cross-Debate Techniques
BY SAVSANGUL MAMADLOIQOVA

I was accepted to the online Cross-Debate Format (CDF) training followed by a regional tournament, organized by the Aga Khan Humanities Project and the University of Central Asia (UCA). During the training, I received in-depth knowledge about CDF, its structure as well as the purpose of this debate format. According to CDF, opponents can ask for clarifications if the question is unclear. After the two-day training, we were divided into teams of three. The tournament consisted of two rounds. In the first round, our team was given the topic, “Improving the economy of Tajikistan through closer cooperation with Western countries.” As a business major, I proposed to solve the problem of economic challenges through improving and encouraging the development of startups, which was positively acknowledged by the judges. The results of the tournament will be revealed in February, and the best teams will be able to participate in the national CDF.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

GIVING HOPE TO ORPHANS
BY ISLAMBEK ASHYRALIEV

My friend Aigerim and I applied for and received a small grant from American Councils to implement a project to support orphans. Often times, orphans are not prepared to face new environments, and do not pursue higher education because they lack the necessary resources and the support systems.

We implemented a project called “Opening the Door to Entrepreneurship” at an orphanage in Tokmok village. We wanted to make students believe that they can earn money for their university tuition and living expenses. First, we provided information about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Then we arranged tours for them. The first trip was to cafe “Solomon Sandwiches,” where all employees are people with disabilities. Students were motivated by the founder’s speech who said that he will start offering jobs to orphans. The second location was a sewing factory founded by a FLEX alumnus, Zafarbek Sulaimanov. The students observed the whole process of how clothes were made and packaged.

At the end of the project, we wanted to teach the participants some practical skills. We showed them how to transfer Instagram pages into business accounts. We directed them to Turkish websites, where they can order clothes for reselling. By the end of the day, students learned how to purchase goods and manage their Instagram pages.

I hope that this project helped them build some confidence in their future. As a result, I have learned so much from them. They were all kind and ready to help each other. They were well-behaved and were not noisy during the presentations like some school students. They sincerely wanted to learn and understood the importance of our training. I am sure they will be successful students because they are kind and empathetic, and they are givers. At the end, we gave them our contacts and let them know that we are ready to support them in their endeavors.
PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN UZBEKISTAN
BY BEKJON MAHMUDOV

On October 14, I volunteered at the EducationUSA virtual fair organized by the U.S. Embassy and American Councils. The series of webinars allowed students from Central Asia to become familiar with more than 60 universities in the USA to pursue bachelor’s and master’s degrees. I had the opportunity to meet a representative of Central Michigan University and help her communicate with participants. I was responsible for translating the information and answering questions about the university. At the end of the day, I was happy that I had helped so many people to determine their future university.

This experience motivated me to teach English at the local educational center in Namangan. I have several groups starting from beginner to intermediate levels. The experience helped me improve my teaching and communication skills. In addition, there is a group of teachers around my age at the center which makes my experience even more enjoyable, as we can share our life experiences and learn from each other. Although the pandemic is still going on, I am open to new experiences and eager to learn more.

SHARING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH TAJIK YOUTH

In November, AUCA fellows Navruzmo Khayolbekova, Gulnoz Faizakova, Farangis Mirzobekova, Nekkhotun Qirgizbekova, and KIMEP fellow Savsangul Mamadloiqova organized a peer advising club to share information about educational opportunities with the local youth in native Khorog. In addition to presentations about different scholarship programs, the team organizes English and math classes, and team-building activities with high school students every Sunday.

“We organized a seminar called “Opportunities for Youth- Study Abroad.” The aim of the seminar was to conduct an informative session for schoolchildren about study abroad opportunities such as FLEX, SUSI Leadership Program, and scholarship programs at AUCA and KIMEP University. The highlight of our session was the U.S.-CAEF Scholarship Program. We, as U.S.-CAEF fellows, were delighted and excited to share our experiences at two different universities, so that schoolchildren know what it is like to be a part of this program and how much it has impacted our lives. So far, we have held presentations at three schools in Khorog, reaching out to approximately 80 high school students,” shared Gulnoz Faizakova.

“We try to motivate students with our presentations about the benefits of becoming U.S.-CAEF scholars at AUCA. Because I was in the same situation as these students last year, I know what it means to go through all these admission processes,” wrote Navruzmo Khayolbekova.
LEARNING & TEACHING NEW SKILLS

Freshman Aikokul Tashpulatova took part in two educational activities that allowed her to both share and receive knowledge. In the passages below, Aikokul shares her story:

“Recently, I took part in the second forum for university students conducted by Young Leaders for Social Progress, Kyrgyzstan (YLSP KG). The goal of this event was to improve youth problem-solving skills through developing sustainable goals and discussing current problems that our society currently faces. I was in a team called “New Generation.” There were different team building games and competitions like “Jeopardy,” “Kahoot” and “BrainStorm.” We created our draft bill and defended it on the second day. I gained a lot of useful information from this event. For example, I did not know how to write a draft bill before. It was a great opportunity to practice such skills.

On October 7-9, I organized a mini project, “English Practice for Teachers.” The main goal of this event was to help teachers of English in Murat Salihov Middle School in the remote area of the Batken region.

I chose this school because teachers needed practical experience. I taught them how to write academic and non-academic essays and conducted a few sessions on speaking. Teachers here have little access to such opportunities; therefore, they were grateful for the sessions and found them very helpful.”

MENTOR FOR COLLEGE PREP CLUB STUDENTS

BY FARIZA DUSMATOVA

Two months ago, the Education USA adviser in Tajiki-stan asked me if I wanted to help with mentoring the College Prep Club students. I instantly became excited knowing I could help students achieve their great goals, but I realized that it was a great responsibility. Luckily, the program provided a training on how to become a good mentor. I received many helpful tips from my instructor. Now I conduct online meetings with my mentees, give advice and answer their questions.

In 2018, I was part of the College Prep Club myself, and as a student, I learned a lot about American universities around the world. Someone inspired me to follow my dream at the club; now I feel proud of myself that I can serve as an inspiration to others. I will feel so happy when my mentees achieve their goals!
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

JUSTICE ACCELERATOR
BY LOLA UMAROVA

Recently, I participated in the Justice Accelerator program organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and American Councils. The program started in August, and during these five months, my team and I have fully developed and launched our project - The Guards. The Guards is a website platform that provides free legal services to low-income citizens to increase legal literacy of the population by providing content about the Kyrgyz Constitution and laws. We partnered with several organizations like Aga Khan Foundation, National Association of Attorneys of Kyrgyz Republic, AUCA, etc. So far, ten attorneys in Bishkek agreed to write legal blogs on our platform. Moreover, we helped 13 people receive legal advice and consultation in the Russian and Kyrgyz languages. Four of them were guided by law students throughout the entire legal process. Recently, the results were announced, and our project won $4,000 in funding from the UNODC. We will be further developing our project, and we are welcoming new sponsors and volunteers. Join us in our effort to make our community and country better and raise the legal literacy level among Kyrgyz citizens! You can contact us at teamtheguards@gmail.com with any questions, suggestions, or ideas!

EMPOWERING GIRLS IN UZBEKISTAN
BY SURAYYO KHYRULLAEVA

In November, the Youth Union of Navai and Kashkadarya councils organized a project called “Zebo,” which involved 30 active girls from Uzbekistan. I participated as a project organizer and together with my team I worked hard to make the event fun for participants. We tried to organize many interesting and useful sessions for the girls. We invited Nigina Fakhriddinova, who was the winner of the “Miss Intercontinental 2019” competition. Her success story motivated the participants and assured them that there are no limits to their aspirations, and they can achieve anything if they work hard. During the project, we organized a charitable marathon. The proceeds went to people in need. One of the recipients, little Husnida, was very happy when we visited her home, and said, “Thank you for helping and encouraging us when our family is in a difficult situation. In the future, I will also join the Zebo volunteers club and will definitely make my contribution to the project development.” It was so nice to hear that from Husnida, as it confirmed that we had achieved our goal.
Despite the unprecedented disruptions imposed by the global lockdown, the Alumni Association continued its activities online, providing an opportunity for the alumni to connect with current fellows through virtual panel discussions and webinars.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

“BUILD YOUR FUTURE CAREER NOW” WEBINAR WITH DINARA ATANTAYEVA

Since graduating from KIMEP in 2013, Dinara has worked at two of the largest and most influential organizations in Kazakhstan, Tengizchevroil LLP, a joint venture between Chevron, ExxonMobil, KazMunayGas and LukArco; and Samruk-Kazyna, a sovereign national wealth fund in Kazakhstan that owns several national companies, including Air Astana, the state uranium company Kazatomprom, the state oil and gas company KazMunayGas, and the national rail and postal services. Samruk-Kazyna is responsible for over $74 billion worth of assets.

After working at Tengizchevroil LLP for four years as an accountant and a financial analyst, Dinara went on to receive a Bolashak Scholarship to study at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, where she pursued a master’s degree in International Business Management. After returning to Kazakhstan, Dinara went through a rigorous selection process that resulted in her becoming a Senior Manager in the Economics and Planning Department at Samruk-Kazyna. There, through her work, she is supporting programs that encourage sustainable development, the modernization of the economy, and the general increased valuation of Kazakhstan’s national assets.

During the webinar on December 5, Dinara talked about her career path and advised students to be proactive and start researching various recruitment programs early on. She also recommended to take advantage of career development and mentorship programs that exist in many big companies and emphasized the importance of developing effective business communication skills. Dinara also provided useful tips on applying for graduate programs.

“I am currently in my final year of studies and trying to choose a suitable career direction for the future. I am thankful for Dinara for sharing her experience and valuable tips that I will definitely use. The Alumni Talk also helped me to understand which master’s degree program to choose and when to pursue it.”

— DILNAZ IMERAMZAYEVA

“Dinara is a very interesting and experienced person. Now, I know more about different opportunities after graduation. Many thanks to U.S.-CAEF for such activities. After graduation, I will miss them so much.”

— AZAT TAIZHAN

“For me personally, the meeting was useful in several ways. It was interesting to learn about real life experiences and challenges. Also, the advice she gave us about graduate programs was very timely because it is one of the critical things that most students are thinking about. For sure, I will use these tips in my decision making.”

— ZEVAR MAMADJONOVA

THE QUOTES BELOW REFLECT FELLOWS’ FEEDBACK ABOUT THE WEBINAR:
E-Business Breakfast Meetings in Tajikistan

The first e-business lunch in Tajikistan took place on October 31. The purpose for the Zoom event was to stimulate networking between Tajik alumni and fellows and give them a chance to get to know each other. In response to requests from fellows and alumni, Alisher Murtazaev, Assistant Product Manager, Coca Cola Almaty, KIMEP’19, was invited as the first speaker. Alisher provided helpful tips on how to apply for jobs, create CVs that are specifically tailored for each position, promote personal branding, and stand out in a competitive market.

The second e-business meeting with Nigora Burhonova, KIMEP’19, was very productive and interactive as well. U.S.-CAEF alumni and fellows from KIMEP and AUCA joined the meeting and asked Nigora many questions, particularly about Nomnom.tj (http://omnom.tj/), a startup that she recently co-founded together with her peer Nilufar Umarova. The startup enables Tajiki women to earn a small independent income by providing made-to-order meals.

The participants wanted to know how the alumni came up with the business idea, found partners, solved payment issues, and dealt with other challenges they faced. “Nigora provided comprehensive answers to all questions. Although Nigora graduated from KIMEP University recently, she has already gained diverse professional experience, which everyone found interesting and exciting,” wrote U.S.-CAEF program coordinator in Tajikistan Zarnigor Faizimahmadzoda.
Valentina Khomenko is a U.S.-CAEF alumna who graduated from AUCA in 2015 with a degree in Business Administration. Due to her academic excellence, commendable service to her community as well as her admirable personal traits, she was recognized as one of the best fellows of her cohort by her peers and the U.S.-CAEF Board of Directors, winning the Steven F. Shea Excellence Award and being selected to participate in the competitive U.S.-CAEF Capstone Internship Program in Washington, DC. After the internship program, she went on to earn her master’s degree in Strategic Entrepreneurship at Jönköping International Business School, Sweden, where she also participated in an academic exchange at EGADE Business School, Mexico. After her graduation, she was employed at the Tetra Pak in Sweden and recently was promoted to Business Development Officer. Valentina kindly agreed to an interview for the U.S.-CAEF newsletter.

What was your career path that led you to your current position?

My passion for the food industry started early in my childhood. If there is one global issue I would love to solve, it would be eradicating hunger. Upon my admission to AUCA, I studied business administration so that in the future I could develop a business in the food industry.

With the help of the Capstone Program, I was able to complete my internship at an agribusiness consulting firm in Washington DC, which reaffirmed my desire to work in the food industry. Later, while finishing my master’s in Strategic Entrepreneurship and working on the next steps, I created a list of the top 10 food companies where I wanted to work. Tetra Pak, which is the world’s leading food processing and packaging solutions company that works closely with its customers and suppliers to make food safe and available everywhere, was on the top of this list.

I joined Tetra Pak and after 2 years in a graduate program, I was promoted to Business Development Officer at the company.

Do you think you will be in your current position for a while?

I joined Tetra Pak as part of the graduate trainee program “Future Talent.” From the very beginning, it was clear that the company was investing in my development to make sure I keep growing and help the company grow in the future. My current position is just the next step in my career within the food industry. One of my plans is to start getting closer to the issue of hunger and working on solutions to contribute to its eradication.

How should current fellows prepare for the future job market?

Nowadays, a lot of people already have a high-quality education and that is not enough to get the job you want. In order to stand out, you need to have a strong personality, and know who you are and what you want. I have been chosen for many programs because I want to do something, not for myself, but to genuinely contribute to society. I believe that there should always be a bigger purpose and a feeling of gratitude. Having said that, I would recommend our fellows always think about paying it forward and doing something not just for yourself.

Also, do not be afraid of having too little work experience. You do not need to be an expert in everything, but you do need to know how to find information and how to consume it proactively; be hungry for knowledge.

How can one find a job right away after graduation?

First, I do not think it is a problem if you have not found a job before graduation. However, it’s always a good idea to start looking for jobs earlier, around 4 to 5 months before graduation. If you start in January, I am pretty sure by June you will be somewhere you want to be.

Second, be proactive and meet with industry professionals to increase your knowledge and network. Make sure you are visible, too, because when people know you, sometimes the job will find you.

Finally, remember, that it is not only the company that is choosing you, but you are choosing the company too. It is good
to have some indication where you are heading and to have the determination to get there. Do research on companies, establish your own criteria, rank them, and go after these opportunities.

**How has U.S.-CAEF helped you in your professional life and personal life?**

U.S.-CAEF gave me the privilege to be selective: I got a chance to choose what to focus on, what opportunities to pursue and how to spend my time without worrying about making ends meet.

If I did not have a U.S.-CAEF scholarship, my university life would have been completely different. By being financially secure with a U.S.-CAEF stipend, I was able to do a lot of community service, lead social projects, and participate in different events, all while focusing on my personal development. For instance, when we went to visit “Coca-Cola Bishkek Bottlers” company, it reinforced my desire to work in the food industry.

I am very thankful that U.S.-CAEF chose me and trusted me. The feeling of gratitude also comes with responsibility. I would like to keep expressing this with my actions and further achievements and prove that everything U.S.-CAEF invested in me was worth it.

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

I would like to emphasize the importance of the [U.S.-CAEF network](#) that we are all a part of. This could be a great start for all current fellows to get inspiration, guidance, and support on the way to building your careers. It is very likely that one day I will be looking for an employee to hire or a fellow alumnus would like to work in a company or industry where I work. So, please, reach out to me. I would happily contribute to your development or just exchange ideas and get to know each other better.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

BEST THESIS AWARD 2020

Atobek Rakhimshoev of Tajikistan, a recent AUCA graduate, has won the Best Thesis Award 2020. His paper, entitled “Servant Leadership and Turnover Intention in Central Asia: A Test of Implicit Leadership Theory,” was acknowledged as the best thesis project by the AUCA administration and Student Intellectual Life Committee (SILC). His supervisor is Dr. Phang Riyang, Assistant Professor of Organizational Behavior. Atobek shared his thoughts about his research work:

“Atobek shared his thoughts about his research work:

“During my senior year, I was working as a part-time IT project manager, and I became genuinely interested in servant leadership, a leadership philosophy in which the main goal of the leader is to serve subordinates. Every employee has a personal view of what a typical leader should be. When a leader fits the prototypical profile of his/her subordinate, the subordinate views the leader in a more positive manner and will be less likely to think about leaving the organization, which can save a lot of money for the organization. If the prototypical profile fits the characteristics of a servant leader, do subordinates still intend to leave an organization? Employee turnover is an expensive cost for an organization. With the motivation to answer the given question, I chose it as my senior thesis topic.

With the approval of the International Review Board, my data was collected through cooperation with companies with 30+ employees in different sectors and full-time employees in Bishkek. For the companies participating in my study, I prepared a custom report. In general, there were many challenges along the way including, but not limited to data collection, Covid-19, complex data analysis, etc. However, I managed to collect the required amount of data and finalized my academic work.

To conclude, employees in Kyrgyzstan do prefer supervisors who meet their personal needs; those who are not abusive, and genuinely care about their employees. This type of management helps reduce voluntary turnover and the costs associated with it. My work will be published in a couple of years, as I need to collect more data to confirm my findings.”
After graduating from KIMEP in 2019, I began working as a researcher at Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS), Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Leading a team of four people, I explored potential sites where AKHS could open a new clinic. In addition, I communicated with landlords, construction agency representatives, and government officials to discuss the financial part of the project. After the completion of the research project, I started working as a FLEX recruiting assistant with American Councils, where I gained valuable communication, organizational and interviewing skills.

When my contract with American Councils ended, I had time to think about opening a business. I analyzed the market and identified a demand in specific marketing services: intensive architectural design courses, and graphic design services. In March 2020, I founded COOLDESIGN PRO, and was able to register it officially on April 19. COOLDESIGN PRO primarily offers graphic design and digital marketing services, including:

- logo design and personal branding
- brand standards guide
- publication design
- PR marketing and ad campaign design
- social media marketing
- website design
- analytics and competitive research

In addition, we started offering a new model of architecture and design education, where experienced architects and designers share their experience with aspiring students and young professionals. The company’s mission is to prepare future professionals in the fields of architecture and design. The training programs are conducted by practitioners who are experienced architects and designers. The following courses are currently available: AutoCAD, ArchiCAD, 3D Max, Photoshop, Illustrator.

COOLDESIGN PRO currently has three full-time employees, one intern, and four outsourced instructors.”
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

ADAPTING TO CHANGE IN BUSINESS: TOP EDUCATION CENTER IN ALMATY

BY ORALBEK SEITMANOV | KIMEP’11 | FOUNDER, TOP EDUCATION

In 2015, I started an educational center called Top Education, which provides English and math courses. Before the quarantine, I ran two offices. However, now there is only one center with five employees. We have taught over 1,500 students in the past five years. Every year our students win language and math competitions and university scholarships. We also organize debates and other activities to help students develop independent thinking, effective communication skills, and open-mindedness.

Now it is time to develop further and expand our services. So, I have introduced several online courses such as Teamwork Skills, Communication, Marketing Analytics, Excel for Business, and Innovating with Business Model Canvas.

In addition to paid services, my company provides free classes to ten students from low-income families. During the pandemic, we organized fund-raising activities to help 100 people from single-parent families or disabled children. In addition, we organized several free leadership and professional development workshops for local youth conducted by volunteers from New Zealand, the UK, and the USA.

In the near future, I want to improve my business, make it work as a Swiss watch and further expand it. Currently, we are among the leading educational centers in our community. Simultaneously, I am preparing for my MBA in 2021.

Alumna Co-Authors an Article

Zhamilia Klycheva, AUCA’17, is currently a graduate student and research assistant at Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA, where she is pursuing her master’s degree in Applied Data Science & International Studies. Zhamilia was selected to take part in the 11th International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics (AHFE 2020) and Affiliated Conferences. At the conference, Zhamilia presented an article that she co-authored with her colleagues entitled, “Continuing Research on Conflict and Peace as well as International Political Economy in the Post-Soviet Space.”
ALUMNI UPDATES

Back to Work

Aigerim Yestayeva
KIMEP’11
BUSINESS PLANNING & PORTFOLIO SPECIALIST
AirAstana

Aliya Sultanova
AUCA’14
PROJECT SUPPORT, PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN CENTRAL ASIA
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Yuliya Lokkayeva
(Davydenko)
KIMEP’16
CONSULTING ASSISTANT, BUSINESS PLANNING DEPARTMENT
ES “TurkmensExpert”, Ashgabat

Assel Zhambyrbaeva
KIMEP’11
SENIOR CONSULTANT
Ernst & Young, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Leadership

Guliza Almazbek kyzy
AUCA’18

(i) selected to participate in the U30+ Leadership Program; (ii) became president of Women’s Network at Coca-Cola Kyrgyzstan

Shaislam Shabiev
AUCA’20

received a special award from Edil Ajibaev, initiator of the volunteer project “Help Issyk-Kul”, in recognition of his remarkable contribution during the pandemic crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

Education

Oralkb Seytmanov
KIMEP’11
won a scholarship to study at the S.P. Jain School of Management in three cities- Dubai, Singapore and Sydney

Azhar Akimbaeva
AUCA’13
MASTER’S IN BUSINESS ECONOMICS
University of Antwerp, Belgium

Askar Saparbekov
KIMEP’14
has completed his master’s in International Marketing at the Strathclyde Business School, in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Askar was a Bolashak Scholar recipient. He has since returned to Almaty.

Promotion

Bernet Nurbekova
AUCA’13
SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT ADVISOR
GIZ Kyrgyzstan

Temirlan Toktosartov
AUCA’15
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Orda Invest construction company

Zarrina Yunuszoda
KIMEP’15
SENIOR AUDITOR
ECOVIS Tajikistan

recognized as the best employee in the company; and passed ACCA FR (Financial Reporting)

Valentina Khomenko
AUCA’15
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Tetra Pak, Lund, Sweden

Ilhan Yollyyev
KIMEP’16
CONSULTANT
RISK ADVISORY DEPARTMENT
Deloitte, Moscow

Jahongir Rahimov
KIMEP’18
SENIOR CONSULTANT
KPMG Almaty

Zhibek Kamalbek kyzy
AUCA’18
SUPERVISOR 1
AUDIT DEPARTMENT
KPMG

New Jobs

Aralyem Zhaksylyk
KIMEP’12
DEPUTY HEAD OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION (TEAM LEADER OF BRAND AGILE STREAM)
Bank Home Credit
Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

She has returned to Kazakhstan following the completion of her Master’s in Marketing Management, Australian National University, Canberra Australia.

Andrey Leskin
AUCA’12
DATA SCIENTIST
Aemetric (remote)
San Francisco, CA

Nursultan Mukhamedkarimov
KIMEP’13
SENIOR LECTURER
Kazgu University
Nur-Sultan Kazakhstan

Aizharkyn Burkanova
AUCA’14
DIRECTOR OF RETAIL CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT
Sberbank Kazakhstan, Bishkek

Kalys Zumakadyr uulu
AUCA’14
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
BTS Digital

Karina Kussainova
AUCA’14
FORECAST ANALYST
Canadian Tire Corporation, Toronto

Nasiba Nurmatova
AUCA’15
PROGRAM OFFICER, MONITORING & EVALUATION
American Councils
Washington, DC
# Alumni Spotlight: More New Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree/Year</th>
<th>Role/Company/Position</th>
<th>Location/Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altynaï Kozubekova</td>
<td>AUCA’16</td>
<td>Financial Analyst, Citibank, Budapest</td>
<td>Recently completed master’s degree in Economics, Budapest Business School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malika Orazymbetova</td>
<td>KIMEP’16</td>
<td>Senior Trust Reporter, Service Corporation International, Metairie, Louisiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aisuluu Abdyrakmanova</td>
<td>KIMEP’16</td>
<td>Engineer, Apple Inc, Seattle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umedjon Kurbonali</td>
<td>KIMEP’16</td>
<td>Consultant, UNICEF Tajikistan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firuzi Hasanova</td>
<td>KIMEP’16</td>
<td>Communications Project Manager, Customer Service &amp; Support Team, Microsoft (via AIM Consulting), Seattle, Washington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inna Tsoi</td>
<td>AUCA’17</td>
<td>Organizational Effectiveness Executive, People &amp; Culture Department, Philip Morris Kazakhstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakhrom Tursunov</td>
<td>AUCA’17</td>
<td>Expert Video Editor, Upwork - freelancer (a top rated video editor), Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galjya Kemelebaieva</td>
<td>KIMEP’18</td>
<td>Research Project Manager, Office of the Provost, Nazarbayev University, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhaksat Bassen</td>
<td>KIMEP’18</td>
<td>Financial Reporting Analyst, Wabtec Corporation, Kazakhstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilufar Umarova</td>
<td>KIMEP’19</td>
<td>Financial Assistant, JICA funded BIP Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy</td>
<td>AUCA’19</td>
<td>Key Account Executive, Coca-Cola Bishkek Bottlers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaman Saralayev</td>
<td>AUCA’19</td>
<td>Auditor Assistant, KPMG, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigora Burhonova</td>
<td>KIMEP’19</td>
<td>Human Resources Assistant, OSCE, Dushanbe, Tajikistan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bezhan Niyozbekov</td>
<td>AUCA’19</td>
<td>Project Coordinator, Design Institute for Transport Infrastructure, Dushanbe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevara Tadzhibaeva</td>
<td>AUCA’20</td>
<td>Sales Manager, Vieva, a startup based in San Francisco, CA (remote)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazirakhon Kholturaeva</td>
<td>KIMEP’20</td>
<td>Specialist, Sales Department, JTI company, Moscow, Russia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablyiikhan Ispayev</td>
<td>KIMEP’20</td>
<td>Intern, Sales Department, Philip Morris Almaty, Kazakhstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**American Councils Representative Offices in Central Asia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>20A Kazymbek Bl Street, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 050010</td>
<td>+7 727 291 9226</td>
<td>uscaef.kz@american councils.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishkek</td>
<td>187 Sydikov Street, Office # 29, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 720001</td>
<td>+996 312 910 989</td>
<td>uscaef.kg@american councils.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dushanbe</td>
<td>127 Rudaki Avenue, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 734003</td>
<td>+992 44 600 4390</td>
<td>uscaef.tj@american councils.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tashkent</td>
<td>12 Shota Rustaveli Street, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 100070</td>
<td>Phone: +998 78 150 71 50</td>
<td>uscaef.uz@american councils.org</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>