

ENTERPRISE

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



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

CLASS OF 2021 AT A GLANCE



55%

**RECOGNIZED ON
PRESIDENT'S & DEAN'S LISTS**

The second cohort of U.S.-CAEF fellows is graduating in the midst of the global pandemic. The 2021 graduates represent the 11th class of student fellows to receive a university education through the U.S.-CAEF Enterprise Fellowship Program. A total of 19 fellows—nine from AUCA and ten from KIMEP University—celebrate their graduation on May 22 in Almaty, Kazakhstan and June 5 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, respectively.

Throughout their four years of study, the fellows have shown themselves as true leaders and role models at their respective universities. They have mentored incoming fellows, taken campus-wide roles in student government, created university clubs, managed entrepreneurial ventures, won opportunities to study overseas, and volunteered their time and skills to their communities.

31%

TOOK PART IN HIGHLY COMPETITIVE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS IN FRANCE, POLAND, TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES, & THE UNITED KINGDOM.

CLASS OF 2021 AT A GLANCE

CONTINUED

"There was not a single day I ever felt homesick because KIMEP became my second home and U.S.-CAEF – my second family."



**SYMBAT
SLAMBAYEVA**
KIMEP University' 21

"Being a recipient of this amazing scholarship, I fully understand how invaluable it is; therefore, I want to help other young people to earn a quality education."



**NURZADA
ABDIVALIEVA**
AUC A'21

"U.S.-CAEF is a program that finds and selects promising students and molds them, nurtures them, and supports them while they are developing themselves personally and professionally during these four amazing years."



**ISKENDER
TAVALDIEV**
AUC A'21



"I am eternally grateful to U.S.-CAEF for its continuous support throughout my four years of pursuing a bachelor's degree and commitment to my professional growth. U.S.-CAEF is not only an educational foundation, but also a family with caring board members and coordinators who are like loving parents, and fellows and alumni who are like brothers and sisters. I am proud to be part of this family and join the rank of alumni."



**ABDUVOHIDKHUJA
QODIROV**
KIMEP University'21

THIS YEAR,
THE GRADUATING
FELLOWS HAIL
FROM 3 COUNTRIES
OF CENTRAL ASIA:

10 KYRGYZSTAN

6 KAZAKHSTAN

3 TAJIKISTAN

U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

A young man in a blue suit and white shirt is pointing forward with a pen in his hand. He is holding a folder and looking directly at the camera. In the background, other people are visible at what appears to be a conference or event.

Our program fellows do not wait to start applying their skills and knowledge to bring about change in their immediate environment, touching and making a difference in the lives of many in their community, region, and beyond. Their leadership qualities shine through in everything they do. They move forward with their innovative ideas, setting out to implement their influential projects with no hesitation, from establishing a local agency focusing on community service and human rights, to succeeding in a highly selective and competitive leadership program, to promoting girl power, just to name a few spheres of their influence. In this section, U.S.-CAEF fellows share their unique experiences and specific examples of their projects and accomplishments highlighting their leadership roles.

We would like to open up our 36th issue of Enterprise by introducing a story of AUCA junior **Nurmukhamad Turkbaev**, and his outstanding victory in a highly competitive contest in a brand new business reality show in Kyrgyzstan, “**Business Okul Ata.**”



A LONG JOURNEY TO A

\$100,000

**INVESTMENT
FOR MY STARTUP!**

BY NURMUKHAMAD TURKBAEV
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2018

**1ST
PLACE**



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED

THE SHOW, A KYRGYZ VERSION OF SHARK TANK, IS THE **FIRST IN THE HISTORY OF KYRGYZSTAN**

My business idea was processing and exporting dried fruits, such as apricots, apples, nuts, and exporting fresh apricots grown in a greenhouse. The journey lasted 6 months, from November 2020 – May 2021.

Of 3,500 eligible applicants, only 100 were chosen for the next stage and invited for an interview. On the big stage, each participant had 45 seconds to present themselves and their business idea, and only 20 advanced to compete further. Each week, we had tough competition series, with two participants dropping out after each round. Each task involved us demonstrating our leadership skills, financial literacy, and stress management skills. For instance, once, we were divided into two groups and given \$10,000 per group to launch a New Year theme business in a short period of time. We managed to cover all our expenses and earn \$1,200 within two weeks by creating our small start-up that delivered New Year gifts for different target segments. Each round of the competition required an extra creative approach and commitment.

Tasks were diverse: launching a burger business, presenting our business idea, demonstrating public speaking skills, HR management tasks, completing tests for strategic plan assessment, meeting with a psychologist-criminologist. Consequently, we had to eat quickly, sleep in the office, and brush our teeth in public bathrooms in malls.

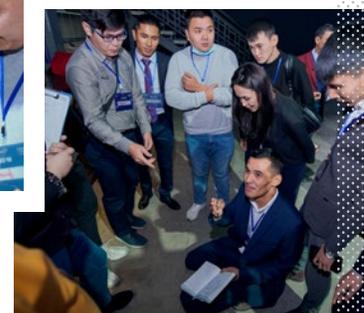
Fortunately, this commitment paid off. In one of the tasks, we were required to gather agents for a construction company that would be selling apartments.

I GATHERED **186** AGENTS, EXCEEDING THREE TIMES THE INDICATORS OF THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS

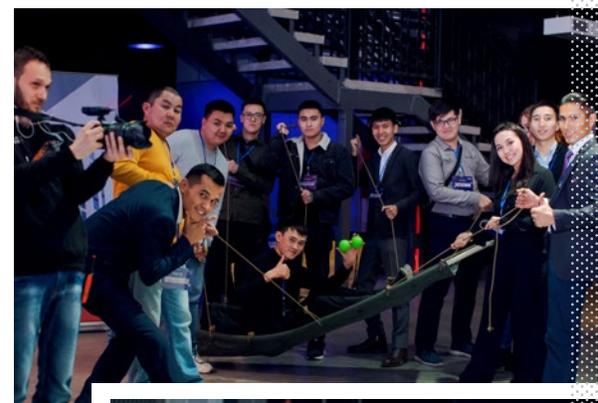
100/3,500
APPLICANTS

ONLY 100
WERE INVITED
FOR AN INTERVIEW

ONLY
20
ADVANCED



SET BIG GOALS & REMEMBER TO CONSTANTLY WORK ON YOURSELF!



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED

After the final pitch, **I got first place** and won one week of a fully funded trip to Antalya, Turkey. However, before that, I had invested hundreds of hours into working on and recalculating the business plan and Excel files. Throughout the journey, I got a lot of help from others.



I would like to take the opportunity to highlight the immense commitment of my mentor, U.S.-CAEF alumnus **Kalys Zhumakadyr uulu** (AUCA'14). We had many offline and online meetings, where we worked on every detail, including the business strategy and financial calculations for my startup. He is the smartest and most committed mentor I have ever had!

I would also like to thank the **U.S.-CAEF support group**. I found their support invaluable when working on my presentation visuals, graphics, identifying growth sectors for my business and studying the western culture of snacks and dried fruits.

“ I would like to thank U.S.-CAEF for preparing me for such a big and tough journey.

The impact of U.S.-CAEF webinars, guest lectures, and workshops that I had attended from the very beginning of freshman year helped me overcome the obstacles during the show and become the youngest winner of the competition!



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED

PROGRESSIVE YOUTH ASSOCIATION

BY ERLANBEK MATISAEV, KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

Returning to his hometown of Batken after taking part in the FLEX Program in 2018-19, **Erlanbek Matisaev** started analyzing his city's problems and needs. As a result, he decided to found his very own youth organization, **Progressive Youth Association**, on October 14, 2019.

He actively recruited a team of staff and volunteers, with whom he has been working for the past 1.5 years. The main goal of the organization is to promote community service, involvement, and community-building through a variety of both small-scale and large-scale projects, such as annual English language camps, debate and public speaking workshops, news and media literacy training programs, and much more.



Currently, Progressive Youth Association is actively working with partners, sponsors, schools, universities, and other organizations to make progressive changes in the entire region, both virtually and in-person. They are also working on several projects sponsored by the U.S. Department of State focused on human rights, community service, public speaking, and debate.

In just a year and a half, they have already organized and implemented more than **80-90 small- and large-scale events and projects in the entire Region of Batken.**



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP WITH PROKG

BY AIANA RYSBEKOVA
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2018

In May 2020, **Aiana Rysbekova** and **Islambek Ashyraliev** were among the 25 participants of the ProKg Leadership Program, selected from 568 applicants. The Leadership Program is aimed at strengthening the potential of ambitious young people with leadership qualities and creating a favorable environment for networking with highly qualified professionals.

During our participation in this program, which ended in January 2021, we attended a number of sessions dedicated to adaptive leadership with Umar Shavurov, who is an international development consultant and an adaptive leadership trainer. These sessions were very informative for us; we learned how to solve problems systematically, identify unforeseen issues, and be proactive. Through small group projects, we were also able to apply all the theoretical knowledge to real work.

For example, my team and I launched a platform through Instagram where students from various regions of Kyrgyzstan can gain information



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED



on educational and professional opportunities through the videos of participants of these programs. We conducted information sessions, which helped to gather more than 400 students all across Kyrgyzstan.

The biggest takeaway for me was the knowledge about leadership that we can actually apply to solve challenges on a larger scale in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia with more adaptive approaches and mindsets.

Along with his team, **Islambek** conducted a project focused on increasing awareness among school students in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan about modern professions such as programming, SMM, and graphic design. They provided 4 masterclasses in an online format to over 100 students from different regions of Kyrgyzstan. They hope to eventually reach out to even more school students and help them gain a clear understanding of the different professions that are available to them.

Throughout the program, we were able to meet a lot of professionals from different areas, who shared with us their experiences of achieving their career and personal goals.

Additionally, ProKg introduced us to a big community of Leadership Program participants and alumni, who are full of ideas and passion to make change.

We would encourage all U.S.-CAEF fellows to apply to this program because the combination of U.S.-CAEF and ProKg has unstoppable power!



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED

HISTORY OF KYRGYZSTAN VIDEO PODCAST

BY DINISLAM ALMAZBEKOV
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

Over the past few years, I have become really interested in podcasts. They help me better understand many concepts about life, politics, sports, love, and even literature that I would not have otherwise learned about.

Shortly after I began my exchange in the United States, I came to the realization that people back home in Kyrgyzstan did not know much about the history of our home country or its people at all. I became quite upset when I realized this, and I was disappointed with our educational system. After spending time in the United States, I noticed how patriotic many American citizens were. If we do not fully know about the history of our country, it can be difficult to truly admire it.

To help people learn more about the history of Kyrgyzstan, I helped create a video series and podcast about the country's history. Approximately four out of five people listen to podcasts to learn something new; my team and I are using the podcast platform to raise awareness of the people and periods of time that have come before us. Through examining history, we can learn how our ancestors, civilizations, ideologies, governments, and cultures operated, how they started, worked, and how they have changed. The bright history of the world helps us to paint a complete understanding of where we stand nowadays. I do believe that by educating our society about its past, we can raise a whole generation of like-minded patriotic people who, in exchange, will be proud of and work hard for the country.

GIRLS LEADERSHIP

BY SURAYYO KHAYRULLAEVA
UZBEKISTAN, COHORT 2020

Last year, I served as the coordinator of "Girls Voice" in my region. "Girls Voice" is a club designed to help girls gain self-confidence, practice self-care, support each other's success and build skills, knowledge, and social networks among young girls in our society. The "Girls Voice" club recently organized an event that brought together 100 of the country's leading changemakers in the business, sports, media, and education spheres to celebrate the potential of girls and call for urgent action to support girls' empowerment in every part of the country. I felt very energized when we came together to connect and discuss girls' rights and global girls' issues. I really enjoy such events. I always believe that every girl in every part of the world should feel empowered to achieve her goals.



U.S.-CAEF CHANGEMAKERS LEADING THE WAY

CONTINUED

MODEL PARLIAMENT OF KYRGYZSTAN

BY DIANA UVAROVA, KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

After a lengthy selection process, I was lucky enough to be chosen as a member of the **first Model Parliament in the history of Kyrgyzstan.**

The essence of the project was to encourage young people to become civically engaged and demonstrate how parliament should actually work. For me, a person who studies software engineering and is not always involved in politics, it was very interesting to finally understand this, especially in the context of recent political events that have taken place in the country. It is terrible to remain indifferent now, and it is even more terrible to remain politically illiterate.

The professional teachers at AUCA and the Precedent Partner Group have done an excellent job. They taught us in an accessible and interesting way about the intricacies of politics, the state structure, new draft constitutions, and different forms of government. They showed us how political debates should be conducted in practice. The political novices like me learned a lot, and the people with some existing knowledge were able to learn new information that surprised them, but we certainly all challenged ourselves in different ways. The week was very difficult because we, acting as members of parliament, analyzed current issues and political affairs, voted and debated. On the very last day, we already felt like real leaders who were fighting for justice and the betterment of the country with our whole hearts.



GROWING & BRANCHING OUT: OUR FELLOWS ARE UNSTOPPABLE!

The pandemic has no power over our fellows, who choose to grow in their academic and professional careers in the face of pandemic-induced constraints and challenges. This section highlights a number of inspiring stories shared by our enterprising fellows.

INTERNSHIP AT PWC

BY ADILKHAN KALIBEK
KAZAKHSTAN, COHORT 2017

I gained many valuable lessons and skills from my internship at Pricewaterhouse-Coopers, and I could talk at length about them, but I would like to highlight a few of the most important ones:

First, PwC is a very prestigious international company, and I gained a lot of experience at the international level. During this internship, I also increased my knowledge in the audit and accounting spheres and became eager to continue learning about these fields.

In addition, I greatly improved my time management skills throughout this experience. I had many responsibilities and tasks assigned by my older colleagues, which made me focus on improving this skill. Also, during the course of the internship, I managed to visit several cities during business trips, and met very smart and fun people, which made my working days even more interesting. Although I had a few other options for internships, I am very glad that I was able to be employed by PwC.

I'm very proud to have had this experience. I hope this is just the beginning of my career path and that I will reach greater heights. For anyone who is hoping to work on their professional development and reach their career goals, I would say this:

"A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and **HARD WORK**. Hard work always pays off."



BY DANIL BONDARETS
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

In the fall of 2020, I joined the Enactus club at AUCA. Enactus has proven to be a great platform to implement useful and meaningful social projects throughout Kyrgyzstan. My proposed project, 'Nutritious Food' was selected to be represented in the national Enactus competition. The main beneficiaries of this project are unemployed women, who are offered opportunities to take part in the production and selling of an eco-friendly bone broth product. The current situation with Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions is slowing down the pace and progress of the project, but we are still aiming to implement our goals. So far, my team and I have researched the target audience and created the business plan. Currently, we are searching for beneficiaries willing to support our good cause.

GROWING & BRANCHING OUT: OUR FELLOWS ARE UNSTOPPABLE!

CONTINUED

LEARNING ABOUT STRATEGIC CONSULTING AT BAKER TILLY

BY AIANA RYSBEKOVA
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2018

Starting in January of 2021, I began interning as a strategic consulting assistant at Baker Tilly Advisory in Bishkek. The consulting department where I have been interning provides growth and profitability services for existing companies and commercial and marketing services for private investors.

They do not typically hire college juniors, but I was lucky to be invited by the director after successfully competing in a case championship; as such, I became a part of a very supportive and professional team. The workload was quite heavy, but I had a chance to take part in three main business development projects, which focused on such wide-ranging topics as construction, agriculture, and digital consulting. In a short time, I gained a deep understanding about each business area.

Throughout the internship, I strengthened my skills in performing desk analyses and text analyses, writing business plans, and interviewing clients and other stakeholders. Another main task of my internship was analyzing data from previous research and making infographics with my colleagues for internal use within the company.

In addition to these duties, I was able to participate in an annual meeting with other Central Asian, Russian, and Ukrainian offices of Baker Tilly, where I gained a deeper understanding of what a big company like Baker Tilly sees as potential opportunities in the future, and in what directions they are developing.

I am very thankful for this experience because I not only gained new knowledge, but met an awesome team, who provided me with very valuable feedback for my future steps. I am looking forward to rejoining the team!



GROWING & BRANCHING OUT: OUR FELLOWS ARE UNSTOPPABLE!

CONTINUED



OPENING NEW DOORS IN MY CAREER

BY UMAR NASRIDINOV
TAJIKISTAN, COHORT 2017

Stepping Into 2021, with a full load of energy and enthusiasm, I started looking for a job. Soon I came across an IT company that was advertised as the best of its kind in Tajikistan. As I had taken two programming classes, I thought why not give it a shot. That was the beginning of a new journey. It turned out that LIVO is indeed the best IT company in Tajikistan. You would ask me why? Professionalism, Culture, and People. I have been working full-time at LIVO as a Sales and Project Manager for 2 months now. Although I met these people recently, it feels like I have known them for a long time.

Working as a Sales Manager is not as easy as I thought it would be. I learn new things every day. Though I am new in the company, I already have a couple of projects going on. Finding new clients and business opportunities, meeting people, networking, managing projects is what I love about this job. From the very first day at LIVO, I felt like it was the right place to be working at. One of the biggest lessons that I learned from this experience is that we should never be afraid of new things, new opportunities, and getting out of our comfort zone. You will never know if you like it until you give it a shot.



A TRUCKING BUSINESS

BY BAKYT MAMYTBKOV
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2017

I am currently in the process of starting my own company. The trucking business is one of the largest spheres of business in the U.S.; consequently, there are high rates of concurrence. Companies reduce costs by outsourcing labor from less developed countries. The company where I work provides dispatching services; after gaining some work experience with different kinds of companies, I was able to learn how the various processes work. By opening your own LLC, you can hire drivers and expand a company. Through my company, my goal is to create optimal conditions for drivers and allow them to register their truck with my company to start working. The services we will provide include dispatching, accounting, legal processes, assisting with buying a truck, and more. Currently, I am working with my partner from the U.S. on registering an MC number. Once we receive that, we will apply for liability insurance for the company. We delegate work according to our abilities and strengths, which allows us to be productive. My part of the job is to create a team for operating the company. His part is to manage all legal processes of opening the business. Our goal is for the company to open at the end of May, and we look forward to seeing where the journey takes us.



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

BY GULNOZ FAIZAKOVA
TAJIKISTAN, COHORT 2019

Since February, I have been interning with the Global Encounters – Tajikistan Hub (part of Aga Khan Development Network) as an SMM. My main responsibilities include creating content and promoting the Instagram and Facebook pages, doing research on various designs, platforms, and audience preferences, as well as writing posts and articles on the Global Encounters alumni. As this is my first experience in SMM, so far, I have learned a lot about marketing and how it functions. For me, it has been such an interesting experience, and I am sure, throughout my internship, I will keep learning and honing my writing and marketing skills.

NOVEMBER 2021

RAC
XXI | U.S.-CAEF
Regional
Alumni
Conference
2021

HYBRID EVENT

**TURNING A CRISIS
INTO AN OPPORTUNITY:**

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE & HONING SKILLS THROUGH PANDEMIC

Searching for ideas of when, where, and how to explore new aspects of professional development, and perhaps, what exactly to focus on in our “new normal”? Look no further! Our fellows provide an insight into their experiences gaining knowledge, new perspective, and honing skills instrumental to their chosen career paths, in the context of the pandemic, which has altered the way things operate around the globe. While COVID-19 has separated us physically, it has intensified the virtual global interconnectedness and created a host of opportunities for growth.

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE & HONING SKILLS THROUGH PANDEMIC

CONTINUED

BECOMING A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN THROUGH MANAS DEBATE CLUB

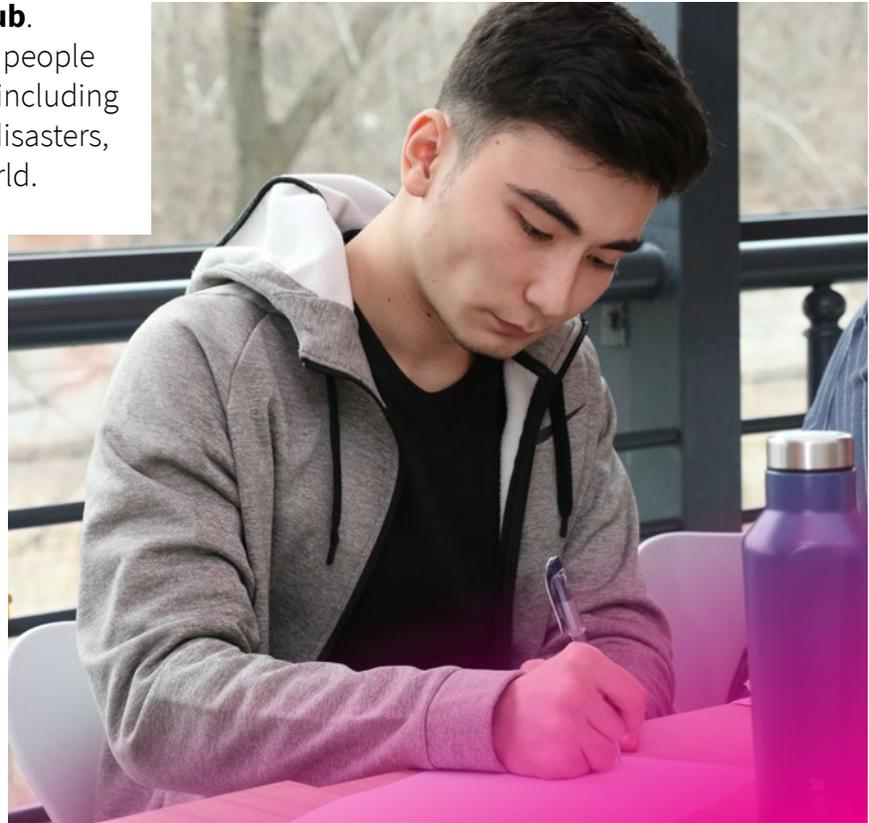
BY FARUKH FARKHATOV, KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

I recently joined the **Manas Debate Club**. The debating community is an oasis for people seeking conversations on global topics including international relations, environmental disasters, and politics in countries around the world.

In debates, we consider resolutions on several different themes that develop our world outlook and help solve relevant social and political problems. For instance, false media stories and outlets are becoming an increasing issue around the world. There is a lot of falsified information that gets circulated in Kyrgyzstan, which, unfortunately, is even sometimes spread by state media. The debates help me to sort the information I receive on a daily basis. Looking at the same issues from different perspectives may sometimes contradict my own beliefs, but that is exactly what makes me think before making any rapid conclusions. In this way, I am able to develop my critical thinking, one of the most important skills to be a responsible citizen.

The debating club is an excellent environment for educating and nurturing responsible and engaged citizens. In addition to organizing tournaments in Bishkek, the debate communities also conduct debate tours in the nearby regions. IDEA conducts online and in-person debating tournaments for young people from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This organization is trying to spread and introduce the debates beyond the borders of Bishkek. Recently, I was selected as an actor on a series dedicated to informing viewers about debates. The best thing about it is that all the main characters will be speaking only Kyrgyz during the series, which helps spread interest about debates among Kyrgyz youth.

I have been participating in debates for over three months, and I have taken part in a number of tournaments.



I encourage everyone to find the activity they feel passionate about. Taking part in debates has been incredibly rewarding and informative for me, and I hope to continue exploring this passion.

Although at this stage in my debating career I have not earned many accolades, I am consistently motivated to demonstrate a high performance at upcoming major tournaments.

Most recently, I challenged myself by taking part in one of the important debate tournaments. The Mix Boom Cup takes place every year since 2015. The main concept of this Cup is “mixing” advanced speakers with newbies, those who have been debating for less than a year. I got a chance to team up with an amazing person and formidable speaker Dastan Osmonaliev, known for his great talent and 4 years of experience. There were 40 teams all seeking a victory. We were

on a winning streak for two days straight, debating and ultimately making it to finals.

This was quite an achievement in itself. Given that there were so many contestants with almost 10 years of debating experience, competing against those masters in the finals was no easy challenge.

Nevertheless, I gained a lot of knowledge and experience from both debating and general terms of the whole event. In addition, I am proud to mention that I recently became a member of Bishkek Debate Center, and actually, I was privileged to help organize the Mix Boom for 2021.

**I EVEN MADE IT TO THE FINALS AT THE
“NO CONNECTION CUP” HELD IN BISHKEK**

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE & HONING SKILLS THROUGH PANDEMIC

CONTINUED

EXPERIENCE
WITH SKYENG

BY BAKTYGUL TAZHAMATOVA
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

While many things were shut down during quarantine, I still wanted to spend my time wisely, so I continued practicing my English in the hope that it could help me earn some extra money. My practice paid off, as I passed the interview and became employed as an English teacher at Skyeng, an online English teaching and learning platform.

As an English teacher, you have the ability to both teach and learn a lot from your students. I have students who are between 30-50 years old, and from different parts of the world, including the United States, Russia, and Europe. It brings me joy that in the hour-long lessons I provide, I can share my knowledge and experience with my students, and that I can also learn a lot from their experiences, cultures, and lifestyles.

Teaching experience is very valuable, because every student is different and you often need to find unique methods of teaching to suit each of their individual backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses. Working at Skyeng is very convenient; if an urgent situation comes up, you can easily reschedule the classes if needed. You get to build your schedule yourself, and there are many materials available for improving your teaching skills. This online teaching experience was also very helpful for my first semester at AUCA because I was able to put myself into my teachers' shoes, and it was easier to adapt to online classes. You can learn much better after having taught someone else!

THE CFA INSTITUTE RESEARCH
CHALLENGE IN KAZAKHSTAN

BY ALMAT ORAKBAY & DILNAZ IMERAMZAYEVA
KAZAKHSTAN, COHORT 2017

KIMEP Fellows **Almat Orakbay** and **Dilnaz Imeramzayeva** came in second in the CFA Institute Research Challenge in Kazakhstan. The CFA Institute Research Challenge is an annual global competition that provides university students with hands-on mentoring and intensive training in financial analysis and professional ethics. Each student is tested on their analytical, valuation, report writing, and presentation skills. They gain real-world experience as they assume the role of a research analyst.

Almat and Dilnaz gained valuable skills that will be useful for their future career in finance. While creating a valuation report, they learned how to build a financial model to forecast companies' future revenues and cash flows.



"I can say for sure that participating in the CFA Challenge was a great decision. The CFA Research Challenge gave us a chance to get a deep understanding of a real company's valuation process. Thanks to this competition, I was able to practice my hard and soft skills extensively"

— **DILNAZ IMERAMZAYEVA**



"It would be impossible to achieve such great and satisfying results without all team members' coordinated efforts"

— **ALMAT ORAKBAY**

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE & HONING SKILLS THROUGH PANDEMIC

CONTINUED

MAIN PART IN A FILM ABOUT POZNAN UNIVERSITY

BY AIANA RYSBEKOVA
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2018



At the beginning of my exchange semester at Poznań University of Economics and Business, I had a chance to star in a promotional film for the university. The film was targeted at international students, and depicted the campus and student life through the eyes of actual students. Taking part in this project provided a great opportunity to learn more about the university and its history and meet new people.



The film took about 4 days to shoot, and I had a chance to visit many areas of the campus, including an impressive new building and the sports facilities. The biggest takeaway for me was the observation and participation in marketing production. The PR and Marketing director of the university showed and explained to me all steps of creating a marketing product, such as the film we were creating. I believe this experience was a very valuable part of my exchange, where I strengthened my knowledge in marketing and my skills as an actress.

GIVING BACK TO COMMUNITY IS WHAT WE DO! THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

Would you agree that the most rewarding of all the aspects of the program, by far, is the experience of contributing to the betterment of your community? In this section, fellows share their experiences taking initiative in serving their community, stepping up to help establish protections for vulnerable groups and individuals, proactively helping the overwhelmed healthcare entities in pandemic, and more.

“YOU ARE NOT ALONE” PROJECT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



BY YIMAN ALTYNBEK UULU
KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2019

In December 2020, I came across a post on social media advertising a feminist organization called “Новый Ритм” (New Rhythm); they were looking for developers to realize their project, “Сен жалгыз эмессин” (**You are not alone**), a mobile app with a backend. So, I applied as an Android developer with two other people and, as a team, we were selected to take part in the project among a couple of other teams.

The goal of the project is to raise awareness among residents of southern Kyrgyzstan of the problem of domestic violence through the implementation of an informative media campaign.

The You are Not Alone mobile application will be “camouflaged” as a food recipe application called “Рецепты для тебя” (Recipes for you), and will allow users to click on a specific button to get into the “real” app. The goal of the “secret” part of the application is to inform women and girls about what violence is, its various forms and consequences, as well as about strategies to combat some domestic/family violence issues. We hope our app and the project as a whole is going to be very helpful for women and girls in the south.



KINDNESS WILL SAVE THE WORLD!



BY FARIZA DUSMATOVA
TAJIKISTAN, COHORT 2020

Life is a mere moment, which consists of ups and downs, but there are things that can always make every person’s life more beautiful.

One of the most important is kindness, it awakens love, care and inspiration in us and adds brightness to our lives. Recently, a touching story about a woman appeared on the Internet, a story about a woman, who did a difficult job, typically performed by males, for a piece of bread in order to feed her four sick sons. I could not get past this story and decided to organize a small fundraising team and visit this woman. Fortunately, many of my friends supported my idea and we collected a good amount of money and clothes.

I was extremely happy, when I realized that I am surrounded by such kind people, who are ready to help. We collected everything needed for the trip and got ready for our journey.

The state of life of those women we visited made each of us be grateful for everything we have. Seeing her tears of joy and beautiful smile on her face, I realized that the real happiness is to make others happy.



THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

CONTINUED

CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

BY SAMAR KANATOV, KYRGYZSTAN, COHORT 2020

The ORT, the Kyrgyz national examination for high school graduates, is a tremendously important test for young people in Kyrgyzstan hoping to attend local universities.

I have extensive experience with the test, having taken it twice and each time placing among the graduates with the highest results in the country. Last year, after obtaining the **Golden Certificate**, I received an offer to work in an education center as a Russian language tutor for ORT preparation. With my classes still taking place online, I had plenty of free time and I decided to accept the offer and gain some experience in a new field.

I have been teaching for almost six months now and I love it. I have always had a passion for learning and exploring the Russian language, but teaching it to young people and explaining its most confusing but entertaining aspects has given me an even deeper appreciation for the language. Our lessons are mainly focused on practical components of the language and the peculiarities of the test, but, in fact, the learning process is far more than just test preparation.

During the sessions, I meet many highly motivated young people with enormous potential for growth. In one of my most recent groups, I even met a few students who were planning on applying to U.S.-CAEF. I provided some information about the program for them and informed them about specifics of the application process.



Another thing I like about my job is our teaching team. It consists of enthusiastic and committed young people who strive to give it their all while they are teaching. Being in such a motivational environment provides me numerous opportunities for personal growth. It also allows me to help other young people broaden their horizons and succeed after graduation,

which is possibly the most rewarding part of my work. I am eager to continue assisting younger generations in realizing their potential and discovering the best opportunities in education. For now, I plan to continue learning and getting more qualified and experienced to widen the scope of my contribution to this field.

“ I AM VERY KEEN TO ADVANCE THE PROMOTION & DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN THROUGH MY WORK. ”

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

The pandemic has shaken the global society to the core on every level. In these challenging times, U.S.-CAEF alumni have served as beacons of strength and hope for their families, friends, and communities. In this section, our alumni share their valuable advice, experience, and ideas for innovative projects, career and personal growth, and ways to support your community through the COVID-19 turbulence. What an inspiration to all of us!





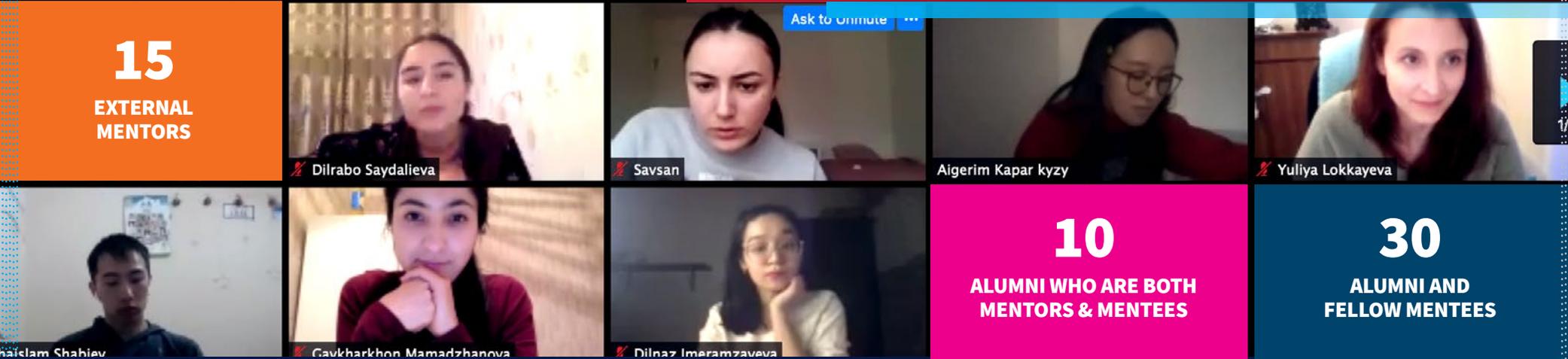
**SEVARA
TADZHIBAeva**
LEADS
ALUMNI
MENTORSHIP
PROGRAM

15
U.S.-CAEF
ALUMNI MENTORS

ALUMNI

MENTORSHIP

PROGRAM



15
EXTERNAL
MENTORS

10
ALUMNI WHO ARE BOTH
MENTORS & MENTEES

30
ALUMNI AND
FELLOW MENTEES

A TOTAL OF 70 PARTICIPANTS ARE NOW ACTIVELY TAKING PART IN THE PROGRAM

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED



After two days of engaging training sessions for mentors and mentees taking place across different time zones, the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Mentorship Program led by alumni officer **Sevara Tadzhibaeva** kicked off with an opening ceremony on March 14.

Of the 15 external mentors, eight are alumni of U.S. government-sponsored programs such as the **Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Program, FLEX, UGRAD** and **Peace Corps**; the other half are Central Asian business leaders.

The purpose of the program is to foster a collaborative learning relationship between different generations of U.S.-CAEF fellows and alumni across borders and connect them with industry leaders who can help guide their careers. To promote active engagement, various activities are offered to the participants.



EXCERPT FROM MENTEE REPORT

Mentee **Kasiet Mambetkul kyzy** of Kyrgyzstan, AUCA'19, Accountant, RF Construction, wrote about the meetings with her mentor, **Ilhan Yollyyev** of Turkmenistan, KIMEP'16, Consultant, Risk Advisory, Deloitte:

“We had a self-reflection talk to understand key factors that I need to focus on. I received a few tips on how to adapt time management to my character as I am more of a spontaneous type... Overall, the mentoring process is going well... I can express myself freely and receive honest feedback.”



ONE-ON-ONE COACHING FOR MENTORS

Izat Osmonov of Kyrgyzstan, AUCA'13, Financial Controller Analyst, ExxonMobil, who took advantage of the one-on-one individual coaching session with a professional trainer, **Wojciech Tworkowski**, wrote,

“I received valuable pieces of advice on personal growth from a person who has been there, done that. It was a very timely session and it helped me a lot.”



MENTEE FOR A DAY

Mentees had a chance to request a mentor for a day from the list of mentors and conduct an informational interview with that person of interest. **Azatbek Ismailov**, AUCA'18, Consultant, KPMG Almaty chose **Tangulu Diushakhmatova**, AUCA'11, a Chevening scholar at the London School of Economics to be his mentor for a day.

“Tangulu gave me guidance on how to win a Chevening scholarship and shared contacts of people who did well on the GMAT. I am very thankful to her because she sincerely wanted to help me”

— **AZATBEK**

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

On April 27, the first winners of the “Mentor of the Month” and “Mentee of the Month” competition were announced on the program’s Facebook group platform:

**MENTOR OF THE MONTH**

Mohira Kurbanova of Uzbekistan, Project Officer at International Organization of Employers, Geneva, Switzerland, was selected as the mentor of the month for

“being helpful not only to her mentee but other participants as well, and sharing valuable resources with others.”

Her mentee, **Bostan Seipova** of Turkmenistan, KIMEP’13, Financial Analyst, Grand Medical Group is particularly grateful for Mohira’s advice on the subject of her current interest – social programs.

**MENTEE OF THE MONTH**

Aigul Saparova, AUCA’22 of Kyrgyzstan was selected for her serious attitude, enthusiasm, and efforts she is putting into her progress. Aigul is happy to have **Daniyar Abdiev**, AUCA’19, Co-founder, Semantir as her mentor:

“Thanks to Daniyar being proactive, we had our first meeting before the opening ceremony. My mentor and I have so much in common that it seems like he can read my mind! As a result of our interaction, I am developing a habit of openly communicating with my colleagues which can help me reach my potential to the fullest. Now, I am more into reading about self-development. I learned that mentor-mentee relationships do not give pressure, but rather help you celebrate small achievements, discuss issues together and build self-discipline.”

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

INTERVIEW WITH BEKZHAN AKBAYEV

U.S.-CAEF alumnus **Bekzhan Akbayev**, KIMEP University'19, recently sat for an interview with KIMEP senior **Dilnaz Imeramzayeva** to talk about his professional experience and offer advice to current fellows. Bekzhan currently works at Philips Morris International (PMI) as a business development and planning analyst. During the interview, Bekzhan shared his personal experience and provided valuable advice to current fellows about professional development and applying for jobs.

Q: How did you become employed with Philip Morris International? What was the application process like?

I got into Philip Morris International through an internship program called INKOMPASS. I believe it is still active, and another U.S.-CAEF fellow – Abylaikhan Ispayev – also applied to this program and was offered a job in the sales department in the summer of 2020. When I applied, it was 2017, the pilot year for this program in Kazakhstan. The application process was very challenging because there were multiple steps, including an SHL aptitude test, numerical reasoning, and verbal reasoning.

Then there were a couple of interviews with the HR department, and only then were candidates shortlisted and invited to an assessment event. We took part in three challenges, including a short case interview with the middle management of the company; a business case, which we presented to the managers and assessors; and a collective activity, a case that we had to solve in teams and present a solution. I believe there were around 200 applicants and only 7 people received an internship offer. The internship itself was fun and interesting; we had our own projects, which we were fully responsible for, from the point of creation of the project until the end. We presented the projects to the senior management of the company. At that point, our managing director was Aibat Akhmetlimov, who was also a lecturer at KIMEP four years ago.



After the internship, I was offered a full-time job and the transition was quite seamless, as I already knew most of the people I was working with. I learned important project management skills. I also participated in an event called INCHALLENGE, where interns or ex-interns from all over the world gathered in Switzerland to solve real-life business cases. I was the only one in attendance who was from Kazakhstan. The trip was fully paid for, and it was great to see Switzerland, walk through the streets of Lausanne and go to the mountains and see Lake Geneva. I would recommend everyone to apply to this internship program because few other programs in Kazakhstan can compare to this one.

Q: You were recently promoted to the Business Development and Planning Analyst position. How does it differ from your previous position? What are your current job responsibilities?

I started working for PMI as a full-time analyst starting from June 2018 and was in that role for a little over 2.5 years. I was responsible for management reporting and we had to detail the full Profit and Loss statement. We made a budget forecast starting from the unit volumes, sales, cost of goods sold, and operating costs. We were also responsible for the margin improvement. It was both a great and challenging experience, as the workload was quite heavy. After gaining

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

some experience, I aimed to further my professional development by transferring to my current department, business development and planning. I am responsible for the Central Asian markets; I do the market estimation models and pricing-related tasks. For me, it is a more interesting role than the previous one. I believe it is a great step for better understanding the business and how it works. It is also a great role for my further growth and development.

Q: Could you provide any tips about applying for a job?

I am still at the beginning of my career and do not have lots of experience, but I can offer the following advice for current fellows: it is not likely that you will get a full-time job instantly after you graduate, because you might lack significant work experience. From what I have seen, companies rarely have employees without experience in full-time roles. Thus, you should definitely look for internships and get that valuable work experience. It might not be directly related to your major, but any experience is helpful. Try to be outspoken and unafraid of giving your opinion. Try to show that you are there to make positive changes and are willing to work. That way, the people you work with will remember you. This is what helped me to get a job.

Q: During your student life, you were a member and subsequently the President of the KIMEP Pie student organization. What did you learn from this experience?

It was a very memorable time and experience, which made me who I am and formed me as a person. When I came to KIMEP, I was a rather shy person and had difficulties making acquaintances and friends. I believe that KIMEP Pie changed all of that. You have to talk to a lot with new people and work with organizations, sponsors, and partners. I was also an editor of KIMEP Pie magazine. During my time at KIMEP, we released three issues of the magazine. When I was President, I had to manage 50 people and keep them motivated without paying them any money.

It takes almost as much time as a job, but it is an unpaid position. The presidency might seem like a prestigious role, but it is also a lot of responsibility and you have to resolve internal conflicts within the team. That said, it provided a great management experience and I loved my time there.

To all fellows, I would also recommend joining student organizations or even creating new ones. This is what makes KIMEP special among other universities – the active student life and the openness of the administration to allow this student life to blossom.

Q: What role did U.S.-CAEF play in achieving your personal and professional goals?

I am grateful to the Foundation for providing me the opportunity to study at one of the top schools in Central Asia. I do not know where I would be right now if not for my U.S.-CAEF scholarship and KIMEP education. I am really grateful to the Board and the

U.S.-CAEF team for all the workshops and training sessions, which were very useful for our personal and professional development, and understanding what we want in life and how to achieve it. We also received constant motivation from the alumni, who encouraged us to strive to be better.

I remember one workshop, in particular, that helped me a lot to understand my strengths and weaknesses and how to use them effectively. This was around the time when I was applying for internships, and it really helped me and was pivotal in my professional development. I would highly encourage current fellows to attend all workshops, as they really do help you. The U.S.-CAEF team is invested in helping fellows succeed.

U.S.-CAEF also provides great opportunities for networking, because you are studying alongside some of the brightest people. All of the U.S.-CAEF fellows went through the same tough selection process. Right now, we have an Alumni Network and we can use it to share valuable insights and exchange some tips.

Q: What motivates you in life? Do you have a life credo?

Like most people, I want to make a positive impact on other people's lives, be a good person and achieve success. Maybe I can lead by example or help people who are in need. I consider myself a hardworking person, and I strongly believe that if you do a little extra work every day, then you will see the fruits of your hard work.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

SEMANTIR WINS THE CENTRAL ASIAN TECHSTARS STARTUP HACKATHON 2021



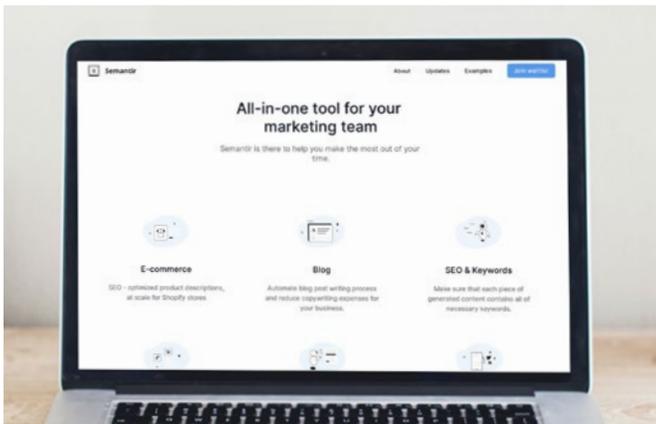
BY DANIYAR ABDIEV

AUCA'19, CO-FOUNDER, SEMANTIR,
MACHINE LEARNING ENGINEER, LOVELYTICS

On March 30, my team of four and I participated in the Central Asian Techstars Startup weekend hackathon, which was an online event that consisted of several stages.

My team comprised Akbar Ryskulov (business development), Eldiir Temir (software engineering), Anya Kawun (UX/UI), and myself (overall product and AI engine). For the first stage of the hackathon, teams had to win a local country-wide hackathon; only then could they participate in the final Central Asian hackathon, where the best three teams from each country competed for a chance to win a cash prize of \$3,500 USD for their respective startup. Our team was able to win first prize not only in the country-wide hackathon, thus advancing to the finals, but we also won first place in the Central Asian hackathon, becoming victorious over 14 other top teams from 5 countries.

At the hackathon, we presented our AI tool for copywriters, SEO specialists, and SMM specialists. Our tool can generate product descriptions, blog ideas, intros, outlines, and social media ads from just a few keyword inputs. Here at semantir.com, you can see some examples of our product description generation from a few inputs. These examples demonstrate that just a few inputs were enough to create publication-ready product descriptions; we hope it will save a lot of time for copywriters who can use our product in their everyday work. My team will continue working on our product and we are hoping to launch it soon. Wish us luck!



HELPING WOMEN THROUGH INSTAGRAM VIDEO BLOGS

BY GULNAZA KHALMANBETOVA

AUCA'17, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, USG SMALL ALUMNI GRANTS PROGRAM, AMERICAN COUNCILS, BISHKEK

Recently, I created an Instagram page dedicated to sharing my experiences and demonstrating how women can balance work, family, professional ambitions, and other interests. This platform provides me space to apply some of the creativity that I cannot use as readily during my workday. The blog is a place where I can be myself and relax after a tough workday.

On my page, I produce videos about home repairs where I share details about creating an effective budget; managing service providers, designers, and a construction team; working with service agreements; and coordinating other details related to this type of work. I also share my family's experience of how we saved and worked to be able to purchase our apartment. Many viewers find these stories motivating and inspiring. In addition to the educational videos, I organized an online course on finance fundamentals, online operations, and online shopping (ordering and delivering goods from other countries can be complicated due to the disorganized postal system in Kyrgyzstan). This course provides employment for three women, who were once students of mine. Since 2019, more than 180 women have completed my courses and about 40 women have launched their own online stores and become financially independent. I am extremely happy to have this chance to help other women, particularly in rural regions, step out of their comfort zone and become better versions of themselves.

My greatest source of motivation to continue the blog is the sincere gratitude from people who said they learned something new from me. Sharing what I know with others is extremely satisfying and rewarding.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

DIGITAL NOMADS – “BACK TO THE FUTURE”

BY ALMANBET ABYLKASYM UULU, AUCA'11, FOUNDER, SMART UNIVERSITY, PROJECT MANAGER, “YOU” YOUTH PROJECT, HELVETAS SWISS INTERCOOPERATION



Over 1 million fellow citizens of Kyrgyzstan work in low-skilled jobs abroad, mostly in Russia. They send remittances to their families in Kyrgyzstan. In total, presumably, at least 2-3 million people of Kyrgyzstan live on income generated outside the country. This, in turn, means that the country is incapable of ensuring economic and, perhaps, even food safety for 50% of its population. **This is an immense problem that calls for action.**

As a fastest way to address the above problem of under-developed human capital and unemployment, I decided to launch an educational institution – Smart University (SU). The SU focuses on offering 2-6 month accelerated courses in specialized, narrow professions. Its graduates will be equipped with skills for conducting business online as digital nomads. In the longer term, we will expand to cover any professional service exportable online.

The 2020 pandemic and subsequent lockdown shifted the entire world, including Kyrgyzstan, online. Though, most of the local people, especially in the regions, were limited by the lack of their English proficiency. This shed light on the importance of the English language, especially in the online job market. Therefore, under the SU, we are launching online English courses – Smarten. The core difference would be its trainers, mostly FLEX/UGRAD/AUCA alumni/students, and the use of an experiential learning methodology. The Smarten will initially focus on the local market. It will further expand to other CIS countries and beyond, where demand for English is growing exponentially. At this point, the focus is on product development and reaching the product-market fit, upon which, we will roll out internationally.

I have over ten years of experience working with international organizations, including the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and, currently, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. In business, life is colorful, harsh, proactive, and the drive for interesting life is there to push and pull you towards the goals. Along the journey, it is important to always be thankful and practice gratitude, aim high, and act daily!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

ALUMNI CLOSE-UP: ZHIBEK KAMALBEK KYZY

BY AIGUL SAPAROVA

AUCA'22

Zhibek Kamalbek kzyz, a Finance and Accounting major, graduated summa cum laude from AUCA in 2018. During her student years, Zhibek also completed internships with VEON, SkyMobile (Beeline), KPMG Bishkek, Ashoka, and the U.S. Embassy.

While her internships led to her career choice as an auditor, Zhibek's initial interest in auditing was sparked by her dear friend, U.S.-CAEF alumna **Azatbek Ismailov**. Zhibek notes,

“As a freshman, he would always talk about his dream job with such a great inspiration! He would describe how auditors at the Big 4 would have great opportunities in the future.”

Zhibek found her finance and accounting classes challenging, yet very interesting. Driven by the challenge, she wanted to explore the options of working for the Big 4. In her senior year, she started an internship at KPMG Bishkek LLC. Zhibek loved the atmosphere, her like-minded colleagues, and the opportunities the internship offered. Later in 2019, she started as an Assistant 1 at the company. Zhibek has recently received a double promotion as an audit supervisor. Zhibek likes how her current position promotes constant learning and helps develop an understanding of external business environments. The workload can at times be enormous, but it gives her an opportunity to learn fast and grow rapidly as a professional. The work never gets boring.

Zhibek credits her success, in part, to the support from the U.S.-CAEF alumni network. At KPMG, she had the opportunity to work with U.S.-CAEF alumnae **Makhabat Tashbaltaeva** and **Asel Kaldybaeva** on different projects. They supported her and shared their knowledge, which helped her complete tasks on time. She knows she can reach out to them for help anytime.

Zhibek is grateful to the U.S.-CAEF program for providing students not only with financial aid but supporting them unconditionally in other areas of life, just like a family would do for their children. The program has helped her form a network of lifelong friends. She has also learned the art of sharing; she notes,



ZHIBEK KAMALBEK KYZY (LEFT) & AZATBEK ISMAILOV (RIGHT)

“It is important that you share your knowledge and experience with your peers. I am very grateful to the U.S.-CAEF program for the opportunity to mentor younger fellows and be mentored by older ones.”

Zhibek's advice to younger alumni and current fellows, aspiring to follow a similar career path, is to

“Get an internship early on. Working as an auditor is not easy, but interesting. If this field excites you, give it a try by applying to various internships. If you like the dynamics and pace of work, be sure to apply to assistant positions.”

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER:

A STORY OF HOW U.S.-CAEF TRANSFORMED NARGIZA ZHAKYPOVA'S LIFE

BY NARGIZA ZHAKYPOVA, KYRGYZSTAN, AUCA'12, CO-FOUNDER, IT-RUN

I am Nargiza, born and raised in a small village (up to 1,000 people) of Chet-Nura, Naryn, Kyrgyzstan. The youngest of four, I lost my father when I was four. My older brother and sister weren't able to get a better education, and my father, before he died, got my mother's promise that I would receive a better education.



A retired school teacher of 30 years in our village, my mother took me and moved to Bishkek, the capital city with top educational institutions. With all her savings, she bought a small half a house in Lebedinovka, a village near Bishkek; and we started a new, though financially hard life. I went to high school #5 in Bishkek. I remember my excitement when I first came to Bishkek. The city seemed huge; the streets were so clean, and the people – so beautiful. Now, I have travelled to more than 20 countries; Bishkek now seems to be a small village.

U.S.-CAEF has changed my life completely. I still remember the day I received a call from U.S.-CAEF as the happiest in my life. My mom cried with happiness. I am who I am because of U.S.-CAEF. After AUCA, I got a scholarship

from the OSCE Academy and obtained a Master of Economic Development and Governance degree.

Having gotten married, my husband and I moved to Germany, and I continued my education at the TEL-RAN IT Academy in Berlin. I got a job as a Localization Specialist and provided localization services to Google for 2 years. We returned to Bishkek to develop the IT sector of Kyrgyzstan, and in 2018, together with my husband, we founded the IT-RUN Programming Academy. Since establishing the first branch in Bishkek, we have scaled more branches in Kazakhstan, Russia, Chechen Republic, Tadjikistan, Dubai, and the United States. The pandemic, certainly, affected our business; though, we had a great experience, and now we are

making a big emphasis on developing online education. Overall, we have attracted more than \$300,000 to IT-RUN. We have 68 people in our team and hundreds of graduates. In 2019, I became the Alumna of the year 2019 of the OSCE Academy. Recently, I spoke in the BOS Women International business forum and got a thankful letter from the State of Kyrgyz Republic for Contributing to women entrepreneurship in the country.

Now, our team is working on scaling IT-RUN in all regions of Kyrgyzstan and neighbor countries. I also study psychology, realize myself as a blogger, am a happy wife and mom of my Daniel.

My mom devoted her life to education and education has changed my life. I want more people to get a better education and change their lives. Annually, we give 10 scholarship spots through the "Elim Barsyngy" fund, and those from financially disadvantaged families study in our academy for free.

I think this is the responsibility of every U.S.-CAEF fellow, to spread that kindness to more people. 13 years ago, some amazing people, with Mr. Shea (I call him my second father) at the head, believed in me, a girl living in a small country of Kyrgyzstan, even though they never met me in person. From that moment on, I have believed in kindness, and I remember kindness even in very harsh times.

HUGE THANKS TO U.S.-CAEF FOR WHAT YOU ARE DOING! AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING, I CAN DO FOR YOU, I AM ALWAYS THERE.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

WHEN THE WORLD SHUTS DOWN, LOOK FOR A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

BY DILRABO SAIDALIEVA
KIMEP'21

Zhaksat Bassen, an outstanding U.S.-CAEF alumnus, graduated summa cum laude from KIMEP University in 2018. He worked for PwC as an audit associate for 2.5 years, and in August 2020, he joined Wabtec Corporation as a Financial Reporting Analyst.

Wabtec Corporation is a leading global provider of equipment, systems, digital solutions, and value-added services for the freight and transit rail sectors, which merged with GE Transportation in 2019. As a Financial Reporting Analyst at Wabtec in Kazakhstan, Zhaksat is involved in reconciliation of internal records (Kazakhstan) against external records (USA) using Oracle ERP systems.

Zhaksat notes that although, in the context of the pandemic, the first few months of working from home were difficult and overwhelming, he became so used to it that he now prefers it over working in the office. The shift to the online environment due to COVID-19 gave him flexibility and made it easy to explore new options for his career growth. Zhaksat chose to transition to Wabtec Corporation, and he sees himself building his career and moving up to a senior-level position within the next three years. His career aspirations also include obtaining a master's degree from Harvard University.

In his freshman year at KIMEP, Zhaksat set a goal to attend the U.S.-CAEF International Capstone Program, and through numerous academic achievements, he was selected to intern with Atlas Corps, in Washington, D.C. Atlas Corps is an international network of social sector leaders and changemakers promoting innovation and cooperation in addressing critical global challenges.

During his time in Washington, DC, Zhaksat met diverse groups of people, learned business communication skills, and made lifelong friends with the program participants. Zhaksat recommends participation in the Capstone Program as a highly valuable and unforgettable experience. He said, the internship



was less about gaining hard skills, and more about learning soft skills, human interactions, and understanding the corporate environment which is why the time there was rewarding.

According to Zhaksat, Atlas Corps changed his outlook on NPOs. As a finance intern, he learned that NPOs can be a good business and give you a chance to earn money on top of the social impact they have on different communities. In the future, Zhaksat plans to start an NPO in his hometown Aiteke bi, Kyzylorda Region of Kazakhstan. His NPO will be a bridge between smart and ambitious children from Aiteke bi and educational opportunities far beyond their town.

As a high achiever, Zhaksat's ultimate tip on getting high grades is to focus all your attention on the lectures so you do not have to learn everything days before the exam. He also encourages fellows to not take the time and opportunities offered by student life for granted:

“Travel as much as possible, join student organizations, explore different opportunities. Once you start working full-time, despite having finances, you will not have as much time”

— ZHAKSAT

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

FINDING YOUR DREAM JOB: AN INSPIRING STORY OF GULIZA ALMAZBEK KYZY

BY AISULU RYSPAeva, AUCA'23

AUCA sophomore **Aisulu Ryspaeva** has interviewed alumna **Guliza Almazbek Kyzy**, AUCA'18, currently working as a Marketing Specialist at Coca-Cola Bottlers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



Q: Tell us about your life after graduation: what did you experience after completing the university?

After graduating in 2018, I was over-whelmed with a sense of uncertainty about where to go and what to choose next. Choosing between a master's degree and a job, I realized that first, I wanted to gain professional experience. Luckily, opportunities came up very quickly, and within a couple of months, I was able to put my skills to work in my new job.

Q: How did you manage to secure a job with Coca-Cola Bottlers in Kyrgyzstan?

In the summer of the same year, I had the chance to do an internship at one of the largest companies in our country, Coca-Cola Bottlers in Bishkek. I was interested in various areas of business back in my student years, namely, HR and marketing. After a month of practice, I went through a very thorough, multi-stage selection and got a position in the field of marketing. I really liked the selection process itself, since not only our hard skills

were tested there, but also compatibility for a certain position through tests and interviews. This August will mark the third year of my position as a Marketing Specialist, and I am very grateful for this unique opportunity to become an employee of this company.

Q: What has been the biggest challenge to start your first job?

The biggest challenge in starting a career is responsibility. When you practice and gain experience during the internship, you tend to make mistakes, and it is okay. A real job is a new level of responsibility, not only for your achievements, but also for mistakes and shortcomings, which you have to accept and learn from. Mistakes teach us a lot, and if we overcome this barrier and learn to take responsibility for the work done, then later, everything becomes much clearer and easier.

At the beginning of my journey, I was given tasks to order merchandise to celebrate the launch of a new product for an entire department of our company, but the clothing

ended up being a little smaller than the required size. Of course, this was not a global problem, but remembering those moments makes you realize that it is very important to take responsibility in any aspect of your work.

Q: What do you like about marketing the most? How would you describe your work?

The field of marketing is unique in its dynamism. It requires a quick implementation of new projects, a constant change of activities, and all of this under a fast and clear rhythm. I used to think that marketing was all about promoting a product, but it turned out that marketing is, directly and indirectly, responsible for the creation of the product and taking care of its continued success. For example, I worked with the launch of the new beverage product last year, and the process involved not only the design, packaging, and advertising, but also the constant monitoring of recognition, sales, identification, and troubleshooting after careful analysis. In the end, you are completely dedicated to the product and taking care of its relevance

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

among customers. Despite the daily routine and tight deadlines, describing marketing, I understand how fascinating and interesting this profession is.

Q: There was a spectacular promotional campaign by Coca-Cola on New Year's Eve, and you coordinated this important project. Would you please share your experience with us?

It was one of the largest projects in my work experience. We received a huge amount of positive feedback and it advertised everywhere. The idea itself comes from the USA, where the first ads with Coca-Cola trucks were launched in 1995. This year, we decided to continue this tradition, which has become a symbol of the New Year atmosphere in many countries. As a result, three 14-meter-long trucks were launched in two major cities of Kyrgyzstan – Bishkek and Osh. I was directly involved in the coordination along with my team, whose input and support helped to brighten up the pre-holiday week for many people in our country during this difficult time.

Q: To lead such a huge project, what skills should a manager possess?

1) Stress resistance. It is very important to develop the inner core, as you will need it when carrying out responsible tasks.

2) Multi-tasking. While coordinating the caravan, I was also involved in the New Year's promotion as a whole, which included making calls, approving designs, and organizing events. I advise you to develop this skill as early as possible as it will help you tremendously in the future.

3) Communication skills, teamwork, empathy, and support. Whenever someone asks for help, always assist and support your team.

Q: Along with the projects mentioned above, you have several important highlights as well. Could you please tell us briefly about the U30+ Leadership

Program and your role as President of the Women's Network Coca-Cola in Kyrgyzstan?

Our company has several interesting programs that invest in the career and personal growth of its employees. The U30+ Leadership Program prepares future leaders and company professionals under the age of 30 and focuses on intensive professional boot camp training in 6 different participating countries. The selection for the program was multistage and interesting and after two months of training this year, I am currently waiting for the graduation ceremony in Turkey. Besides that, I am President of the Women's Network Coca-Cola Kyrgyzstan, and at the moment, we have a lot of plans and projects planned, but the main goal was and still is to increase the number of female employees in different positions by 2025.

Q: Outside of work, many people, including me, see you as a very motivated person in life. What gives you the strength to move further?

I always get motivated by people. When something doesn't work, I go for a walk to watch people and enjoy nature. Another way to gain motivation is to learn about the achievements and endurance of other successful people, which you can get through mentorship programs.

As a graduate of U.S.-CAEF and ProKg, I get my inspiration from the trainings and meetings, where people share their experiences and ideas. Finally, I would like to mention the importance of sports in our lives, because it is also important to recharge the body with physical activity.

I personally enjoy morning jogging and run many kilometers as often as I can.

Q: What do you wish you did as a freshman, before graduating?

If I had the opportunity to go back to my college days, I would definitely try to study



abroad through exchange programs at AUCA. Traveling opens new horizons for us, and by learning a new culture you develop and grow. Take every opportunity offered by the university and our scholarship program, as you will have less free time and more important things to do in the future.

Aisulu: Thank you for such an interesting interview. We wish you the best of luck and hope to hear more exciting news from such an outstanding and active alumna of the U.S.-CAEF Program.

Thank you for this chance to share my experience with you. I am very grateful to the U.S.-CAEF Program for the opportunity to reach my potential and find my calling.

For all the fellows in the program and especially freshmen, I wish you patience and strength in your online study. I hope you can return to campus soon and have a sea of positive experiences.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

EXPANDING YOUR HORIZONS: MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS IN GERMANY**ZHANNA MARCHENKO, AUCA'20, MASTER'S IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT, OTTO-VON-GUERICKE-UNIVERSITÄT MAGDEBURG, GERMANY, DAAD SCHOLAR**

Germany is highly popular among international students because of its dynamic student life and great funding opportunities. I have been extremely lucky to be awarded an ERP Study Scholarship for Graduates of Economics and Business Administration, sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology.

As a student of the Otto-von-Guericke University of Magdeburg, I can tell that university life here is very diverse even at such difficult times as the pandemic. Here, I would like to share some insights from my personal experience of studying in Germany.

If you want to start your master's program in Germany, it is important to do research. Start as early as possible. The GMAT, for example, requires about 6-month preparation. Applications for the DAAD scholarship should be submitted about one year before the start of the studies. I started researching the programs about a year before graduation, which is still a little late. Follow the deadlines, it's a first step to future success.

Even if you're planning to do a master's in business, management or marketing, you still need good math skills. As an excellent student and WARC math tutor in the past, I can tell that just bachelor's courses in math and statistics are not enough. I took an additional preparatory course at another university, which helped a lot.

Take your studies seriously. The workload at my university in Germany is about 5x times greater than it was at AUCA. It's definitely more about studying than travelling. Trust me, it's going to be nothing like your exchange semester (if you did one). German public education is mainly free; therefore, expect a high competition. Universities are highly selective, and scholarship programs are even more selective.

Get a maximum use of your communication skills. Contact the international office at the university for updates, because information on the website can be outdated. Talk to the head of the student service about accommodation, sign up for a "buddy" program, make sure someone will meet you in your city. Universities in Germany offer a broad spectrum of all possible help options for newcomers, use it!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIETY DURING THE PANDEMIC: SHAISLAM SHABIEV

BY TEMIRLAN UTEGULOV, KAZAKHSTAN, COHORT 2020

The world has strikingly changed since the COVID-19 invasion that forced everyone to desperately adjust to the new norms of a still magnificent yet so unrecognizable world. Families have been separated. Many have fallen ill and even lost their loved ones to the virus. Thousands of people have lost their jobs across the world, including in Kyrgyzstan.



Unfortunately, neither the government nor the citizens themselves were ready for such circumstances, so the number of infected people increased day by day, and the help of the government was absolutely not enough. **Shaislam Shabiev**, a U.S.-CAEF alumnus of 2020, could not stand aside, and along with other U.S.-CAEF alumni, he joined the Social Initiative “**Help Issyk-Kul**”. A large team of volunteers gathered in a short amount of time and the project started growing quickly, providing essential help to many regions.

Shaislam contributed his time and effort, helping with information coverage to keep the population up to date on the real situation; creation and distribution of educational videos from authoritative doctors; distribution of recommendatory videos from local leaders; and the delivery of medical supplies to hospitals and other institutions.

The team has done a tremendous job of mobilizing fellow citizens abroad and delivering an impressive batch of medicines. Besides, their team worked on collecting, processing, and consolidating information on the epidemiological situation and the needs of medical institutions. They also focused on developing strategies for the effective distribution of humanitarian aid and protocols to reduce the risk of corruption after the transfer.

THEY COLLECTED AND USED **\$50,377**:

- **\$39,457** medicines, personal protective equipment, and oxygen concentrators
- **\$5,649** purchase of an ambulance
- **\$2,930** purchase of two medical devices, coagulometers, required to detect blood clotting
- **\$598** to help those in need with food
- **\$675** transfer and withdrawal fees
- **\$1,068** travel and administrative expenses

“During the pandemic, every one of us saw the terrible state of our healthcare system... Since the government could not effectively cope with its responsibilities, citizens themselves needed to take on that responsibility.”



ALUMNI UPDATES

Internships

Haknazar Hallygylyjov

KIMEP'19
INTERN, FREE NOW, HAMBURG, GERMANY; EXCHANGE SEMESTER AT BERLIN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND LAW, ERASMUS SCHOLAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA

New Jobs

Abylaikhan Ispayev

KIMEP'20
CONSUMER ACTIVATION EXECUTIVE, PMI, FEB. 2021

Aidai Topchubaeva

KIMEP'18
DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER MANAGER RG BRANDS KAZAKHSTAN

Aisuluu Abdyrakmanova

KIMEP'16
DATA ANALYST, AMAZON, SEATTLE

Almanbet Sherov

AUCA'17
QUALITY ASSURANCE ENGINEER, APPBOXO

Asylgul Kenzhebaeva

AUCA'15
PROGRAM ASSISTANT, FLEX EXCHANGES TO INTERNSHIPS, AMERICAN COUNCILS, KYRGYZSTAN

Atai Amanatov

AUCA'20
JUNIOR ANALYST, ACCELERATE PROSPERITY, KYRGYZSTAN

Batima Myrzabekova

KIMEP'16
HIRING COORDINATOR, KAVKAZ EXPRESS LLC, DENVER, CO

Bostan Seyipova

KIMEP'13
FINANCIAL ANALYST, GRAND MEDICAL GROUP, ISTANBUL (HEADQUARTERS IN SWITZERLAND)

Darina Yakovleva

KIMEP'15
SENIOR POSM SPECIALIST CARLSBERG KAZAKHSTAN

Didorali Anoyatbekov

KIMEP'20
GUEST EXPERIENCE AGENT, INTERCONTINENTAL MALDIVES MAAMUNAGAU

Farzona Khaidarova

AUCA'20
FINANCIAL REPORTING SPECIALIST, ALIF BANK

Gulkaiyr Tashieva

(SUIUNALI KYZY)
AUCA'17
ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS ANALYST, BAKER HUGHES, BUDAPEST

Kamila Bekbaganbetova

KIMEP'18
SENIOR MARKETER, PROJECT MANAGER, DECODE DIGITAL AGENCY

Kyial Bakytbek kyzy

AUCA'17
CATEGORY MANAGER, FARMAMIR (A CHAIN OF DRUGSTORES)

Meerim Zhanybek kyzy

AUCA'20
TECHNICAL SUPPORT, AGENT, VEEQO

Nilufar Umarova

KIMEP'19
FINANCIAL ASSISTANT BIP PROJECT, JICA

Sevara Tadzhibaeva

AUCA'20
REGIONAL U.S.-CAEF ALUMNI CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

Sezim Beksultanova

AUCA'16
CONSULTANT, UK TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING

Suhailo Mamadniyozova

AUCA'20
PROJECT MANAGER, AMAL CONSULTING GROUP, FINANCE & MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING INSTRUCTOR, BOSTON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & FINANCE IN DUSHANBE

Timur Karimov

KIMEP'17
BRAND MANAGER, HENKEL, KAZAKHSTAN

Zhaksat Bassen

KIMEP'18
FINANCIAL REPORTING ANALYST, WABTEC CORPORATION KAZAKHSTAN BRANCH

Zhanna Kenzhebekova

KIMEP'19
MARKETER, AURORA EVENT COMPANY, DUBAI

Zuhro Bakaeva

(ALIJONOVA)
KIMEP'20
ASSOCIATE, TAX & PAYROLL DEPARTMENT, PWC, KAZAN, RUSSIA

Promotion

Aiperi Sharipova

AUCA'16
HEAD OF THE VOLUNTARY, HEALTH INSURANCE DEPARTMENT, ATN POLIS

Altyнай Moldalievа

AUCA'11
GRANT MANAGER ASSISTANT SOROS FOUNDATION KYRGYZSTAN

Amantur Tynybekov

AUCA'15
EMEA COMMUNICATIONS LEAD, AUTODESK, DUBAI

Asel Raiymbekova

AUCA'16
CREDIT RISK ASSOCIATE, MORGAN STANLEY, HUNGARY, JAN. 2021

Bekzhan Akbayev

KIMEP'19
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING ANALYST PHILIP MORRIS INTERNATIONAL

Makhbat Tashbaltayeva

AUCA'16
SENIOR AUDIT SUPERVISOR KPMG, BISHKEK

Oksana Kovalenko

AUCA'11
BRAND MANAGER, RECKITT BENCKISER (HAS BEEN WORKING IN FMCG COMPANIES IN MOSCOW FOR 7 YEARS)

Shahnoz Jonmamadova

KIMEP'17
SENIOR FINANCE MANAGER, AGA KHAN HEALTH SERVICE TAJIKISTAN

Yerzhan Smagulov

KIMEP'14
PROJECT MANAGER, DAR IT

Zarrinai Yunuszoda

KIMEP'15
SENIOR AUDITOR, ECOVIS TAJIKISTAN

Entrepreneurship

Almanbet Abylkasym uulu

AUCA'11
FOUNDER: SMART UNIVERSITY PROJECT MANAGER: "YOU" YOUTH PROJECT, HELVETAS SWISS INTERCOOPERATION

Daniyar Abdiev

AUCA'19
CO-FOUNDER, SEMANTIR

Nargiza Zhakypova

AUCA'12
ENTREPRENEUR, FOUNDER, UNBENANN.TJPG; CO-FOUNDER, ITRUN. KG (CODING ACADEMY) & EUROPEAN EDUCATION CENTER PERSPECTIVE

Saltanat Mamytova

(Ryskulbek kyzy) **AUCA'11**
ENTREPRENEUR, EXCLUSIVE REPRESENTATIVE IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC, CODDY SCHOOL; DIRECTOR, ROBOTIX

Sezim Zhenishbekova

AUCA'20
CO-FOUNDER & VP OF PRODUCT, CLARLUDUM LLC (A MOBILE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY)

Shirin Mamyrkalieva

AUCA'11
FOUNDER, INTERIOR DESIGN STUDIO MASTER'S DEGREE IN WORLD ECONOMY AT DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Timur Azizov

KIMEP'17
OWNER, E-COMMERCE BUSINESSES

ALUMNI UPDATES

CONTINUED

Professional Development

Nazokat Alimova

(OMURALIEVA)

AUCA'14

became a licensed Certified Public Accountant (CPA) for which she needed to meet the education, examination, and experience requirements. Per AICPA, all candidates must pass the Uniform CPA Examination (CPA Exam), which comprises four sections: Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Business Environment and Concepts (BEC), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR), and Regulation (REG). Depending on the jurisdiction, candidates may also have an ethics assessment requirement. The Uniform CPA Examination is one of the most difficult professional credentialing exams.

Zarrina Yunuszoda

KIMEP'15

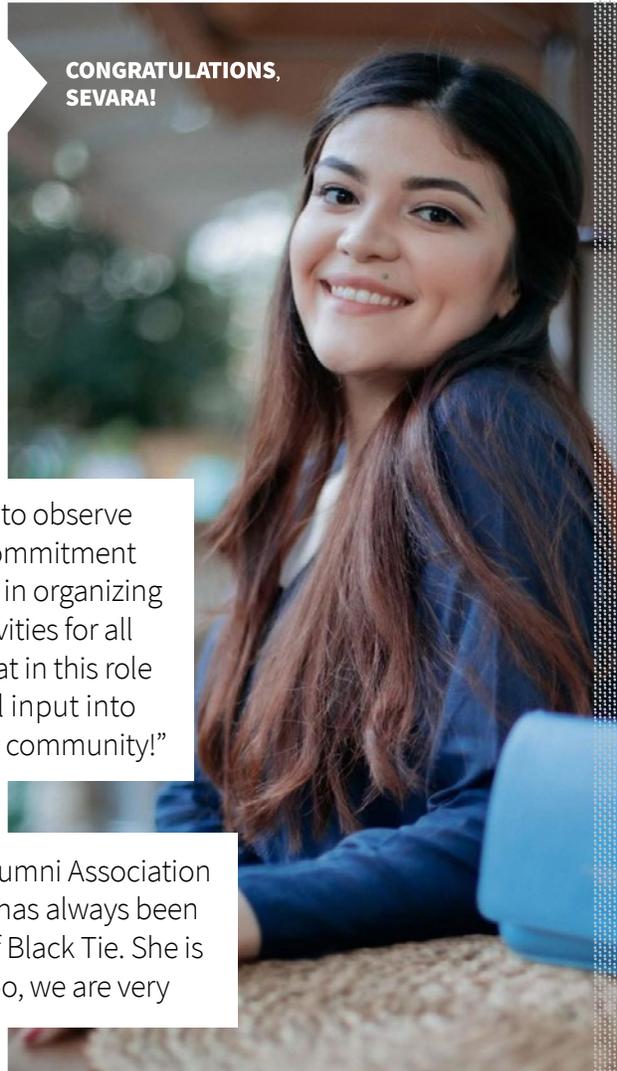
has passed the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) examination in Financial Reporting with impressive results among the top performers of 2021!

Nekdil Abdulofizov

KIMEP'19

Finalist, Global Village Program at Lehigh University, USA

We are excited to announce that **SEVARA TADZHIBAEVA**, AUCA'20 has been appointed by the alumni committee as the new **President of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association!** The committee is confident that during this critical time for the Association, Sevara's enthusiasm, dedication, and infectious positive energy will help bring our U.S.-CAEF Family closer than ever. Below we would like to offer a couple of quotes endorsing Sevara's candidacy:



CONGRATULATIONS, SEVARA!

"I'm sure each of us was able to observe how much dedication and commitment was demonstrated by Sevara in organizing and supporting valuable activities for all CAEFers. I strongly believe that in this role Sevara will bring meaningful input into further development of CAEF community!"

— ARYSTAN MOLDABEKOV, KIMEP'11

"Sevara has supported the Alumni Association since her freshman year, she has always been one of the main organizers of Black Tie. She is doing an amazing job now too, we are very lucky to have her..."

— ANISA ATALOVA, AUCA'16

AMERICAN COUNCILS REPRESENTATIVE OFFICES IN CENTRAL ASIA

ALMATY

20A KAZYBEK BI STREET,
ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN, 050010
+7 727 291 9226
uscaef.kz@americancouncils.org

BISHKEK

187 SYDYKOV STREET, OFFICE # 29
BISHKEK, KYRGYZ REPUBLIC, 720001
+996 312 910 989
uscaef.kg@americancouncils.org

DUSHANBE

127 RUDAKI AVENUE
DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN, 734003
+992 44 600-4390
uscaef.tj@americancouncils.org

TASHKENT

12 SHOTA RUSTAVELI STREET,
TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN, 100070
PHONE: +998 78 150 71 50
uscaef.uz@americancouncils.org